

Told in "Tatt.'s"

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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JOHN LONG, PUBLISHER, LONDON

Told in "Tatt.'s"

BY

Nathaniel Gubbins

Author of

"Pink Papers," "Bits of Turf," "Cakes and Ale," "The Flowing Bowl,"
"The Great Game," "Turf Tales," "A Mingled Yarn,"
"Pick-Me-Ups," "Dead Certainties,"
"All the Winners," etc.



London

John Long

13 & 14 Norris Street, Haymarket

1903

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OUR "SPIN."

A MATTER-OF-FACT ROMANCE OF ANGLO-INDIAN SOCIETY

THE march of civilization and the whirligig of time have produced no more striking changes than those which have occurred in the manners and customs of society in British India. We do not yet pretend to be able, like Puck, to "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes"; but with increased speed in European travelling, the Suez Canal in full working order, and noble, powerful steamships which, despite their bulk, seem to fly over the waves; with railways spanning the length and breadth of the land of the Moguls, communication between the dear homeland and our Eastern Empire has become much easier. And whilst the great continent of Hindustan becomes crammed, at intervals, with mere "globe-trotters," travellers for pleasure, who have no business connections with the country, and who visit India just as their ancestors used to take a trip to Boulogne, the civil or military *savant* who is lucky

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enough to obtain six months' leave now spends it in Europe instead of in "the Hills." This last is an elastic term, and may either mean a stay in Simla, Mussoorie, Nynsee Tal, or any other of the pleasant sanatoria which nestle under this or that spur of the glorious snow-clad Himalayas, or a trip into the land of perpetual snow itself, in the vain attempt to penetrate the mysteries of Thibet, or to stalk the wily ibex, and other *feræ naturæ* of the perilous and precipitous district.

"Where are you going for your Long?" asks Dangerfield of the Dragoon Guards, of Tufton of the Hussars.

"I shall just get home in time for the Two Thou., and shall come back after Doncaster, if I've got the passage-money left," is the reply.

"Haw! Ta-ta, then, dear old chappie. See you later."

So, too, with our womenfolk. Provided funds will allow, there is now no necessity for any one of the gentler sex to spend the hot weather in the plains. And quite as many of the darlings visit the land of their birth as those who fritter away time and reputation "under the deodars."

Some ladies, of course, there still be, who can claim Hindustan itself as the land of their birth, and are not proud of the claim, either. Such as these have vague ideas on the subject of smart society in England; and it is related of one proud dame, who was about to proceed to London for the first time, and who had been

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told she might find it difficult to get a footing in the best circles just at first, she replied proudly,—

"Oh! I'll soon make that all right, dear. I'll ask the whole station to dinner."

The *mem-sahib* of the past, who was either born beneath the *frou-frou* of the *punkah*, or who had come out in a roll-bowl-or-pitch tub around the Cape of Good Hope—the awful monotony of which voyage is still in the writer's mind's eye—became more or less of a fixture in the land of rupees. And, for the most part, she "put on side"—gave herself haughty airs. The girl, pure and simple—and not always so very simple, either—was somewhat of a *rara avis*; most of the feminine population of an English settlement, having, (as it was brutally called) "come out on spec.," and got married with as little delay as possible. And at the time I served an ungrateful country in those warm regions, a spinster—always abbreviated into "spin."—was not to be met with in large doses.

But one cold weather the large frontier station of Ballibad was aroused, as it were, from its base, by some startling intelligence, direct by wire. Electricity in India was in its infancy at that time, and telegrams were few and slow of travel.

"What is ut, me bhoy?" asked Pat Dempsey, the senior sub. of the Onety Onesters, as the adjutant entered the mess ante-room waving a document.

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"There's a 'spin.' on her way to us!" was the reply.

"A 'spin.'?" echoed from all parts of the room.

"Handsome as paint," continued the adjutant. "Not quite twenty-two, wicked eyes, the complexion of a peach, and all the rest of it."

"Her name before you die?" roared half a dozen fervid youths, rushing upon him.

"She's Hamilton's wife's sister, boys, and I'm asked to dine at the doctor-sahib's the night of her arrival."

Hamilton, be it interpolated, was our senior surgeon.

Our grim old commanding officer uprose him solemnly from the table, at which he was seated reading the *United Service Review*.

"I will try by Court-Martial," he observed, in severe and measured tones, "the first of my subalterns who dares to offer marriage to the young lady."

Then he sat down again, and we began to mutter in corners, in highly mutinous fashion.

"Old Chili," as we called our revered chief, who had won his spurs (or rather his troop) at Chilianwallah, was a confirmed bachelor himself, and discouraged the tender passion amongst his subordinates.

It was quite true. A real, live "spin." was very shortly to shed the light of her countenance on Ballibad, whose feminine population were mostly no longer in their first youth, and—whisper it not in chapel—of the "cat" brand or persuasion.

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No wonder the darlings—when they were on land—used to fancy themselves, in their expatriation! In another ten minutes we had arranged for a triumphal arch with suitable inscription, to be erected over the doctor-sahib's compound-gate; and the full programme of the midnight concert to be delivered—with the assistance of the regimental band—beneath her window was drawn up.

The news of the advent of something fresh in petticoats used to cause pulses to throb and hearts to beat their bravest out yonder; and some years after the events recorded in this romance, I thought the little British community of Thayet Myoo, in Upper Burmah, would have gone quite mad when it was told that the then Bishop of Calcutta, on his way up the river by steamer, was accompanied by his sister, and that his sister possessed an English maid!

Speculation as to the appearance of the fair ones was freely indulged in. Every man Jack of us offered the free use of his house and holding for the fair young English rose and her Abigail. Both were prematurely given in marriage, after the "who shall" had been decided by the hazard of the die, and at the billiard-table. Every male amongst us put in an appearance at the landing-stage; and if the River Irrawaddy had suddenly seized the opportunity to overflow its banks and engulf the whole of the gallant Imperial Thrusters, they could not have gasped for breath as much

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as they did when "the riches of the ship" had "come on shore."

"Why, she's fifty, if a day!" groaned poor old "Peter" Grant, our senior skipper.

"Did ye iver see the like o' the crature?" asked "Paddy" Fraser.

"And, Good God!" added another brave warrior, "the maid has a squint on her which would stop an express train!"

"And a moustache bigger than the quartermaster's!" put in another.

But I am "skirting" from the line. Zoe Carruthers, our "spin," was the sister of the good wife of our principal medical officer, who had gone to meet the young lady at Chetul Sindi, to escort her to Ballibad. She had previously been "passed-on" by a succession of up-country travellers; and at that time it took every bit of eight weeks to perform the journey—mostly by *dāk gharri*—from Calcutta. Unlike the afore-mentioned Bishop's sister, Zoe Carruthers was well-formed, young and "crummy." Although an old bachelor of nearly six lustres, I can still distinctly recollect the dark hazel eyes, and the wistful look which came into them at intervals, the mouth like the leaf-housed bud of the developing May rose, the wealth of dark hair—ere she had been with us a week some of the "cats" had put it about that Zoe had a "touch of tar"—done up in the *chignon* fashion of the period. We were for some time in doubt as to whether a foundation of "stuffing" supported her back locks; but

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when one morning she lost her hat whilst out with the regimental hounds, and her entire *cheveline* became free to hang as it listed, we were satisfied, and apologised to her in the spirit. She had the tiniest waist ever grabbed by the commonplace hand of man during waltz or polka, and—in short, she was divine, if ever young woman was.

The male portion of the station buzzed about her like bees around a sunflower. Offers? Bless you, she might have had her pick of the "eligibles," from the chief commissioner—rupees 3333, annas 8, monthly, and a fat pension—who in his time had had so many caps set at him, that he had serious thoughts of passing his leisure hours underground, battened down—to Briggs of the "Bays," the last-joined cornet, whose father was currently reported to be "in soap," and who swaggered accordingly. Professed misogynist as he was, I would have taken 15 to 8 that our revered "chief," with his feelings properly worked upon, and the assistance of an extra bottle of "Simpkin," would have proposed to her himself.

Before the advent of Zoe, no thoughts of matrimony had entered my silly head; but, after I had pulled her, boots first, from under her horse, at the bottom of a deep ditch whilst in pursuit of the hounds—this was upon the occasion of the accidental descent of her back hair—and had been privileged to support her senseless form on my lap, it must be confessed

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that I—well, the little dart had penetrated a vital part. I chafed her hands, administered a stimulant, and entreated the dear little creature to look up and say she had a dear little kick left in her. By-and-by, further assistance arrived; she recovered consciousness, and was driven back to the doctor's house.

"A shaking—nothing worse," was the diagnosis of that worthy man; and when I called next day, at as early an hour as was consistent with conventionality, she looked even more divine than ever, in a light, gauzy frock, trimmed with Eton-blue ribbons.

"How am I to thank you sufficiently for your invaluable aid?" she commenced.

"My dear Miss Carruthers," I replied, feeling myself blushing up to the eyes, "if you only knew the pleasure, the honour, the rapture I feel—"

"*Please* don't talk nonsense," she pouted. "You know you saved my life. That horrid horse would have crushed me had you not lent such ready aid. Maud," she continued, to her sister, who had entered the room, "are we not all aware that, but for Mr Gubbins, I should have been buried in the lonely cemetery here, thousands of miles from home?"

We chatted on; and by the time I had taken leave, and mounted my pony, I was what was then commonly known as a "gone coon." I had but little worldly wealth besides my pay—a few hundreds yearly, which by no means sufficed to keep myself really well; but I reflected that

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where there's a will there's a way. What mattered the absence of wealth to two loving hearts? I was, naturally, of an affectionate disposition, and Zoe would make an ideal soldier's wife—with a lot more nonsensical, reflections, common during the salad days of humanity. Ah me! I was very young then.

The very next day I was detailed to proceed, with another gallant commander or two and some 200 men, on a short march, to punish a few highwaymen beyond the frontier, for committing raids and ill-treating some of our policemen. Such expeditions were frequent at the period of which I write; and although the enemy bolted at our approach, and kept well out of the range of our fire, we destroyed two villages—mostly mud—with great daring and resolution, taking as prisoners of war an old woman and a calf. We had the calf for dinner the same evening; I forget what became of the old woman.

After this I was requisitioned to proceed down-country, in charge of drafts; and a little later on found myself once again on first leave in haughty, naughty Simla.

Forty years or so ago, had I been asked to name one spot on earth in the which I might elect to spend the remainder of my natural life, I should, without hesitation, have replied "Simla." "Larkham-on-the-Hill," when I knew it, was about as good an imitation of an earthly paradise as could be found. But I am afraid we were not all angels who dwelt therein.

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A mountainous health resort (of course we were there for the express benefit of our constitutions), wherein was no drill, no regimental duty, no worry, no prickly heat, with the most glorious climate in the wide, wide world, unlimited amusement (including "Loo")—wherein was absolutely no thought of the morrow—could have been nothing but popular. In a country where the Destroying Angel is perpetually on the pounce—I have, on occasion, in the plains, breakfasted with a man at 7 a.m. and helped to bury him at noon—the *carpe diem* programme is accepted as Gospel; and we certainly lost no time in pursuing it when once "under the deodars."

That hardy annual, the "grass widow," flourished exceedingly "up at the Hills" at that period. Sometimes doubt was cast, by a particularly censorious community, upon the existence of any lord and master; but usually "hubby darling" was openly alluded to, by his *cara sposa*, as "very busy in the courts at Allahabad," or as "obliged to stay in Patna," in case another mutiny might be hatched out. In fact, in India "men must work," must be grilled down in the plains, the while the *mem-sahib* has a good time higher up.

The average grass widow, in fact, makes hay while the sun shines. And she is always more or less dangerous to peace of mind.

Mrs Audley Preston was a very eminent personage indeed in that Himalayan city of universal spread. Most fascinating of relicts *pro tem.*, she was as yet as far removed above

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the breath of scandal, which is the normal atmosphere of an East Indian hill station, as is the Planet Venus from a dull, commonplace earth. And she was an honoured guest at Government House and "the chief's." She couldn't have been more than thirty-nine when her deep violet eyes, ripe red-gold tresses and Juno-like proportions first took me captive; and her worldly knowledge was, I should say, as extensive as were her hooped skirts. The dread crinoline was still reigning at that time; and full well do I remember the outcome of a sermon preached one Sunday by the Simla *padre* upon the enormity of the dress expander. On the next Sabbath Day every female ordered her horse and went to worship in a riding-habit. And it was Ethel Preston who had ordained this new departure.

I had met her for the first time the year before this story opens. I was presented to "the Vortex" (one of her many pet names), as she was deigning to listen to the band one afternoon. She gave me the tip of one gloved finger to touch as I rode away, and rapture! the very next night I sat next to the regal creature at dinner, and had full opportunities for admiring her shapely shoulders and willowy form.

Squeezed in between two well-crinolined dames as I was, there could not have been much more than my head and shoulders visible to the ordinary observer; and I didn't get much to eat. But what mattered food? What signified anything when an hour afterwards I found

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myself turning over the leaves of Ethel Preston's music? I know now that she had a very indifferent contralto voice, and occasionally sang out of tune; but that night to me she was Grisi, Piccolomini and Patti all rolled into one. And when she rewarded me with a cool and dignified "Thanks! Will you kindly see if my *jampan* is ready?" I felt thrilled all over. Before we parted she had invited me to a picnic at the Waterfalls. I knew what that meant—handing dishes about, and opening bottles, and helping the oldest and ugliest women in the party from one slippery rock to another; still, nothing short of dynamite, in large doses, would have made me refuse that invitation. I was very young then.

Only the other day I saw a small child—a dear little dark-eyed tot who looked cut out for an angel—eagerly watching the agonies of a poor, silly moth, which was engaged in cremating itself within the sultry confinement of the chimney of a "Duplex" lamp. She was not a bit sorry for that moth. On the contrary, the wee seraph called to her little brother,—

"Willy, Willy, tum twick! Here's annuvver one!"

And as I gazed my thoughts reverted to Ethel Preston.

After the picnic I became, as it were, fairly installed as one of her aides-de-camp. We had a regular "roster" of duty, and took it in turns to attend her—four or five at a time—when she took the air on horseback, or when, lolling back in her *jampan*, she gave the rest of the

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inhabitants a treat, and was carried up and down the Mall, with occasional halts at the bandstand. I once mentioned something about the Serpent of Old Nile in her gilded barge, but she frowned, and, pointing lazily with her parasol to her "leaders," inquired,—

"Do *those* look like 'smiling Cupids'?"

So Cleopatra was never again referred to, and certainly Mrs Audley Preston's *jampannis*, in their coarse, if gay, knickerbocker liveries, looked more like convicts, or the chorus in a comic opera, than Cupids.

Like the rest of *miladi's* staff, I was usually allowed the mornings to myself in order to recover from any possible dissipation on the previous evening, in the way of jubilation, banquets, dances, theatricals and high play.

But whist at the club in the afternoon was taboo—except when the rain poured down in torrents, as it has a way of doing, in due season, in the Himalayas. So we were usually on escort duty during the fashionable part of the day when out of doors, and kept a strict and conscientious watch over the safety of the proud dame, whilst she shopped or promenaded. I suppose no woman in the world ever courted and compelled more adoration or attention than did "the Vortex," who might well have posed as one of the proudest and most voluptuous dames of Ancient Rome.

Shall I confess that, twelve months later, all this nonsensical dancing-in-attendance, these silken fetters, began to pall upon me? I had

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seen or heard nothing of Zoe Carruthers since the day after her accident. My brother officers were not good correspondents, and were chiefly occupied at Ruddibad, in concocting iced drinks and cursing the beastly climate. My surprise, not to say joy, therefore, was great, when I met Zoe on horseback, accompanied by another lady, just as we had turned a corner round "Jacko," during our duty ride, one afternoon.

"How *do* you do?" cried the girl, excitedly, reining in her steed. "Blanche," she added, to her companion, "this is Mr Gubbins of the Thrusters, that I told you about."

I was riding on the off side of "the Vortex," who, with a somewhat sour expression of countenance, not very graciously gave me temporary leave of absence, to talk to the newcomer. Tommy Brunton of the Fusiliers took my place at *miladi's* side, and the cavalcade moved on at a canter.

Zoe appeared delighted to meet me again.

"Mr Gubbins—Mrs Musgrave," as she introduced me. "You know Captain Musgrave of the Gunners? Blanche and I came up yesterday. What a lovely place is Simla! I should like to live here for ever!"

We rode on together; and, having promised faithfully to put in an early appearance on the morrow, to pilot them to Mrs Brabazon's picnic at Mahassoo, I left the two friends at the door of the Alpine-like residence on Elysium Hill, which the Musgraves had taken for the season.

I saw nothing more of Mrs Audley Preston that

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day, and the next time I called, her coloured groom-of-the-chambers gravely announced,—

"*Durwaza bund hai, sahib!*" which, being interpreted, meant, "The door is shut, sir," a brutal method of saying "not at home," which is, or used to be, employed in Anglo-Indian society.

Snubbed, and not a little disgusted, I determined to give "the Vortex" a holiday, and, with but little thought for the morrow, to improve the occasion with our "spin." to anticipate whose every wish soon became the most exquisite delight.

May I once more repeat that I was very young?

I occasionally met Ethel Preston in the haunts of society; but if she deigned to notice me at all it was with the coldest of nods. Therefore I was more than surprised, about a month after the advent of Zoe, to receive a curt little note from *miladi*, asking me to call "as soon as more important"—underlined twice—engagements would allow.

I called the same afternoon; listened to a cutting reprimand for rudeness and neglect in never even trying to join her cavalcade, after leaving her "in such a pointedly abrupt manner, after meeting Miss Carruthers."

"The three idiots in whose company you left me did nothing but giggle all the time," she continued, "and I will not be made to look silly. Doubtless you were far more pleasantly engaged; although I hear she's a sad flirt, like them all."

It was worse than an "orderly-room wiggling."

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She hoped I was not going to get hopelessly entangled, it was such bad form, and she would never again give me her friendship if I did. Engaged men were hopelessly selfish and stupid—she called it "stoopid." And I was finally dismissed with a very strong hint that unless I "quit spooning" I need never speak to her again.

But I was not to be coerced. Love's young dream is bad to conquer. So for some little time afterwards my daily rides were taken in the direction of Elysium, and I never willingly left the society of Zoe. Not that she was starving for the want of attention or company. There were plenty of "spins." in Simla at the time; but the doctor-sahib's sister-in-law very soon became the chief attraction. Colonel Vaughton of the Intelligence Department, little Toby Blew—who superintended the cultivation of indigo when not engaged in shooting, pig-sticking or in drowning joy and sorrow alike in the bowl—Bellairs of the Lancers, Hill of the Guides, Murray of the Chief's Staff, Teak of the Woods and Forests, and—worst of all—that infernal boulder Briggs of the Bays, had posted up from Ballibad immediately on the heels of our "spin." Confound him! I heard him tell her how that he had ridden all the way, and had killed two *dák* horses *en route*. Liar!

When the programme for the annual Simla race meeting came out, it contained a contest which had been most successfully inaugurated the previous year. The prize was called "The Diana Bracelet," and was a valuable and richly-

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jewelled affair, to be run for by ladies' hacks ridden by gentlemen in strict jockey costume on side-saddles. The year before I had ridden "Moti," a grey Arab, for Mrs Audley Preston, from whose fertile brain the idea of mere men riding on ladies' saddles had emanated. It is not easy even for a practised horseman to adapt himself to the feminine seat; but anything can be accomplished with practice and perseverance. "Although I say it as shouldn't," there were few better jockeys in India than myself; and by dint of an exercise gallop twice round the course every morning I eventually became quite at home in the side-saddle, which, be it added, was about twice the size and weight of the modern affair; a huge sort of *howdah*, with the flaps stuffed and embroidered, and the two top pommels sticking up like buffalo horns.

Industry, self-denial and strict training had met with a due reward, and Mrs Audley Preston's "Moti" had won the first bracelet very easily. This year, however, matters were altered. No sooner had the programme been inspected than I was engaged to ride Miss Zoe Carruther's bay country-bred horse "Ram Lal." And, from what I had experienced of his pace, it was probable that this one would be the most dangerous opponent of "Moti." Much, however, depended upon who would ride the last-named; for, needless to say, the animal whose jockey might stick the closest to the saddle would always stand the best chance.

The fair owner of "Moti," whom I met on

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the Mall one afternoon, face to face, did me the honour to speak. But she was severely sarcastic.

"I would ask you to ride my dear horse again; but *of course* you have a prior engagement?"

I stammered something about being very sorry, but that doubtless Bradley of the Buffs, who was in attendance, would prove an efficient substitute.

"*Please* don't make matters worse," she drawled, adding to her escort, "My dress-maker's, please, quick." And with a superior smile she lolled back on her cushions, and as her *jampannis* in their dashing liveries jogged off with their fair and weighty burden, she reminded me more than ever of the Serpent of Old Nile.

All this time I was getting nervous about our "spin." We seemed to understand each other nicely, and I was still privileged to attend her in most of her jaunts and junketings. But alas! she was in general demand; and the transplanting of such a simple, loving, tender flower into such a hot-house as Simla might very easily lead to trouble. Of course there was not a little selfishness in my fears. But to mix in smart society "up at the Hills," is not unattended by danger. Simla spoils girls; so I determined to lose no time in proposing for her hand. And at a picnic given by the wife of a Member of Council, in a picturesque glen below the Annandale race-course, I managed to make the plunge. After luncheon, and whilst the

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rest of the party were busily engaged in flirtations and spearing scorpions, I induced Zoe to accompany me on a short stroll round the corner. And within the sanctuary of a ruined and disused *Sahari* temple, I flopped upon my knees, in the earnest, old-fashioned way, and asked her to be mine. She gave me a pleading look.

"This is so sudden," she murmured.

"At all events give me some hope!" I urged, gazing full into her glorious eyes.

"But we have only known each other a few months. And we are both so young."

"But we shall both grow older, Zoe—may I call you Zoe?"

"I—certainly—like you very much," she purred. "But—to marry you—oh! it sounds such a sudden and a reckless step to take. Let me—oh! let me, Nat, dear—be unto you as a sister!"

"Rats!" I exclaimed, springing to my feet. "You are the first and only girl I have ever adored. Tell me I may wait, and hope, and work for you. Have pity!"

It was a far too brief interview; but at its conclusion we had both solemnly promised to wait—for six months, at all events. Then, if both remained of the same mind—"And oh! Nat darling, I shall never change!" cried the blushing maiden again and again. And then we rejoined the flirts and the scorpion slayers.

Alack-a-day! The course of true love fairly bristles with obstacles. After that picnic we seemed to drift, slowly, gradually, apart. I

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still exercised "Ram Lal" every morning on the race-course. His mistress I saw, but not so frequently. And oftentimes when thus privileged the green-eyed monster would envelop me, as I saw her accompanied by that villain Briggs of the Bays. I usually left them with murder in my soul, although at first I thought she did not respond to his devilish advances, and that he bored her. And then I had my doubts, and couldn't sleep a wink o' nights. And then Simla began to wink, and to giggle, and to say that Briggs was to be envied in having cut out "that confounded ass, Gubbins."

And soon afterwards came the "bolt from the blue" itself. In the morning-room, just before we went down to dinner at the club, on the first night of the "Lotteries"—the racing commenced next day—the ruffian confided to me, whilst asking for congratulations, that Zoe had only two hours before consented to be Mrs Briggs. And I could have hit him, if he had been more my own size.

"You lie!" I exclaimed passionately.

"That ought to mean pistols for two, or a Court-Martial," he remarked coolly. "But don't let us quarrel. Take it quietly, dear old chappie; 'tis the fortune of war."

"The fortune of Briggs!" I cried. "The heartless jilt, the shameless hussy, is only marrying your dollars."

And then the other fellows separated us; and we sat down to dinner at opposite ends of the room.

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All through the soup and fish courses the words of a recently - published poem were running through my brain. The subject was especially applicable to my sad case; and the last verse went:—

“And this, when the case you sum up, is
The result, if your feelings it hurts:—
All men are self-confident puppies,
All women are frivolous flirts!”

As I was afraid, the air of Simla had proved too keen for our spin.

Before the curry was handed round my mind was made up. Briggs would, of course, ride “Ram Lal” for the Diana Bracelet on the morrow. I would make my peace with “the Vortex.” Hastily calling for writing materials, I indited, and sent off by the club *chuprassi*, the following penitent scrawl to Ethel Preston:—

“May bygones be bygones? And may I ride ‘Moti’ to-morrow? *Peccavi!* Still the most devoted of your slaves, N. G.”

The answer soon came:—

“Yes, they may, and you may. The *return* of the Prodigal is *nice* to think of. Now, mind—I have ordered my *syce* to take ‘Moti’ to Annandale, for you to ride his *winding-up gallop*, at six to-morrow morning, so mind you are *punctual*, sir. Call here *directly* afterwards for further *orders*. I hope my generous *forgiveness* will be *fully* appreciated. E. A. P.

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"*P.S.*—I hope nothing *dreadful* has happened! How *stupid* you have been!"

The race for the Diana Bracelet was placed third on the card, and as I sat in the scale, being weighed-out—eleven stone, including a twenty-eight pound saddle—I felt tolerably confident of success. Briggs was, of course, to ride "Ram Lal," and, as he was no horseman, I saw no reason to fear danger from that quarter. Of the other five starters, the only one whose chance was much appreciated in the lottering was "Lady Laura," the property of the wife of the Judge Advocate-General. "Moti" was favourite, I having bought his chance at auction, and backed him that morning, in accordance with instructions received, to win a substantial stake for his fair owner, who had sent her "colours"—violet, primrose sleeves—to me at the club, with a brief note stating that the jacket had been stitched together with her own hands. But I was sceptical as to this statement. Ethel's hands were far too precious to their owner to be defiled by needlework; and I heard afterwards that "Fifine," deffest and most devoted of French maids, had been deprived of the previous night's natural rest in order that the garment might be finished in time.

"Moti" was a little troublesome at the starting-post. He had the lightest of mouths, and it would not have done to catch hold of his head and "ram" him along. So he got off indifferently when the flag fell, and as the race

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was but a little more than half a mile in distance—it was called by courtesy the "five furlongs' course"—an effort to get on terms with the rest had to be made without delay. So, neglecting the time-honoured principle, as I knew my horse could stay, I let him mount the hill at top speed, and at the final bend, seeing an opening on the rails, I took advantage thereof, shouting at the same time to the nearest jockey for "room."

"Pull out, confound you!" I roared. He glanced back, and then I saw it was Briggs.

Only three other horses were anywhere near the front rank, and the language of Briggs, in reply to my polite request, was absolutely unprintable.

Like lightning, I had placed my bonnie Arab steed on a level with "Ram Lal," on his left. The next moment that horse had "bumped" mine—whether accidentally, or by the murderous design of his rider, I will not write, although holding a very strong opinion on the subject. The force of the impact sent "Moti" and myself, with a sickening crash, through the half-rotted railings, and into a large flower-bed, in the Botanical Gardens, twenty feet below. I remember the crash, a loud scream from the distant Grand Stand, a yell of "Ram Lal for a thousand!" and the rest was silence.

I came to in my own room at the club. "Only slight concussion," was the diagnosis of the man of medicine who had been called in; but for some days afterwards I felt as if some-

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body had broken every bone in my body with an axe. My first anxiety was connected with poor "Moti," who had sustained an ugly gash in his flank, but, it was hoped, would soon be all right again, although the scar would be permanent.

As soon as I could get about, I dressed, and rode over to *miladi* to explain matters, and apologise. She looked annoyed, and was not brimful of sympathy. I did not expect her to be.

"How *stupid* of you to get knocked over!" was her greeting. "It was entirely your own fault. You ought to have made your effort on the other side. At first I thought I should never be able to forgive you—especially as you got off with hardly a scratch, and you've quite spoilt the appearance of my dear horse."

I assumed the most penitent look I could, and presently she told me some news. Of course that horrid little flirt's horse had won; and people said the wedding would take place next cold weather, in Calcutta Cathedral. That dreadful Briggs had lots of money, but she did not approve of mercenary marriages, and she thought, and hoped, that the girl would lead him such a life.

I was to be given one more chance of re-establishing myself in favour with Mrs Audley Preston. Next month she was going to hold a series of *tableaux vivants* at her place; and "hubby darling," if he could only get short leave of absence from his important duties down-country, was coming up to lend a hand. She hoped I would make myself useful. I bowed, and replied that I was entirely at her esteemed orders.

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After a conference or two, and a great deal of discussion, it was decided that Sir Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe* should furnish the subject-matter for the pictures. The cast was soon settled upon; my hostess would appear as Rowena, whilst the wife of an esteemed Member of Council would be the Rebecca. The handsomest man in Simla was selected for the Black Knight (afterwards Richard of the Lion's Heart), a colonel of Hussars consented to pose as Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert, and little Green of the Gunners was at once pounced upon for Isaac the Jew. I was pressed into the service for Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe, a part which, though inwardly delighted to fill it, I at first, with innate bashfulness, begged to be excused from having anything to do with. There was to be an invisible chorus behind the scenes, chanting specially-composed music. A gentleman who was said to be on speaking terms with a London actor was engaged to arrange the tableaux; the dresses were ordered weeks before, and everything gave promise of going "with a bang."

The last rehearsal took place the evening before, as the Lady Rowena required the whole of the next day for thought and trying on her costumes.

There was a luncheon-party given that very afternoon, by a great and good man who controlled the destinies of a new and important weekly journal named the *Forerunner*. And I went to that luncheon-party.

It was a late sitting; and the flowing bowl

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was freely circulated. My bearer subsequently stated that he was altogether unable to awaken me from the "slight slumber" which I had thought necessary to render me fit to undertake the *rôle* of Ivanhoe in a proper and artistic manner. And that slumber was not disturbed until my chamber was invaded, long after midnight, by little Green of the Gunners.

"Well!" shouted that worthy, "you've been and gone and done it at last!"

"What—what d'you mean?" I inquired, now thoroughly awake.

"Mean? Why, they had to put on Briggs of the Buffs as Ivanhoe, as you didn't turn up; and he laughed every time the curtain was raised. She's pretty mad, I can tell you, and if I were you I wouldn't go near the house again."

I didn't. I went out far into the interior the very next day, to stalk the wily ibex, amid the treacherous glaciers and the eternal snow.

"And what became of our 'spin.?'?" do I hear some gentle reader inquire.

My dear sir, or madam, if you are old enough to remember the principal events of the "wicked sixties," and have studied the interesting literature of that period, you cannot have forgotten the celebrated divorce suit of "Briggs v. Briggs, O'Reilly and Another." There was no defence.

As I have previously observed, Simla is apt to spoil girls.

THE POISONING OF RATTLESNAKE

A RACING STORY WITH A MORAL

"DONE to a turn, Desborough!" exclaimed Lord Arthur Bromley, as the big chestnut was pulled up, in front of a select and admiring crowd, after completing two circuits of the course, led by a stable-companion. "Couldn't possibly look better—Gad! he's fit to run for all our lives."

"Ye-es," said the owner, somewhat moodily, with a far-away look in his honest grey eyes, "my horse is all right now. What he will be like after he's saddled to-morrow, goodness only knows! Did he take hold much, Jack?"

"Like a steam engine," replied his son, Captain John Desborough of the 71st Thrusters, vaulting lightly out of the saddle. "Does you credit, Batters—he's at least a stone better, I should think, than he was at Dingleton last month."

"Yes, Capt'n," observed the trainer (who, like most of his profession, seldom wasted his words any more than his oats); "I hope I've done my duty by him."

"Duty!" exclaimed Lord Arthur, "you shall have a statue, Batters, like Lord Nelson.

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England expects that Rattlesnake will win the biggest steeplechase in the country to-morrow; and England will not be disappointed, unless I'm as blind as a mole."

"Nothing like being confident," said Lady Desborough, turning to a strikingly-handsome girl at her side. "What do *you* think of our favourite, Marcia?"

"Just lovely!" replied her companion, in a faultless Broadway accent. "And if he doesn't capture the prize I shall have to cable poppa for more dollars. But he is just lovely, I'll go the limit."

Whether the eulogium referred to the horse, or to the handsome young warrior who had just dismounted, may be left to the imagination of the reader. But admiration—even faint praise—from Marcia Jerome was worth risking most contingencies to obtain.

It was the opening day of the world-renowned steeplechase meeting at Waterbury; and at the conclusion of the sport, the majority of the spectators having quitted the scene, Rattlesnake, first favourite for the Grand Smashemall Steeplechase, next day, had been treated to a pipe-opener, "in the presence" (as a horse-watcher would write to his editor) "of his owner and friends." Sir Anthony Desborough, best of husbands, most liberal of landlords, truest of "all round" sportsmen, had driven a merry house-party over, on his coach, from Desborough Court, some ten miles distant; and thus far nothing had occurred to mar the harmony of the

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proceedings. Everybody, male and female, had won; and a large consignment of small-sized gloves would have to be ordered from the metropolis the very next morning, to satisfy the requirements of the ladies, who, good, careful, thrifty souls! have never embraced with much ardour the credit system of settling wagers. A woman who has won from you on a race-course is worse than any Shylock with his little matter of a bond. But this by the way.

The luncheon had been excellent, and the champagne—this was in the early part of the month of April—not *too* freely iced. "Jack" had ridden two winners, after what looked like a "crumpler" beneath one of them, at the "double." But the shriek of terror which at first went up from the spectators soon changed to an approving cheer, when the Captain, who had never let go of the rein, was seen to be "up and at 'em" again.

"Hard as nails, and what a plucked 'un!" exclaimed Lord Arthur.

"Give it 'em, Jack!" yelled Bertie Sansargent his very precocious subaltern.

"My boy, my boy!" thought the fond mother. "Why *will* he ride steeplechases?"

And the fair American, who had been watching the race with tightly-compressed lips, through a ridiculously little pair of mother-of-pearl-mounted binoculars, and whose heart had been in a chronic state of palpitation both before and after the accident, waved a tiny lace

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mouchoir, and cheered with the rest as the winning number went up. But there was a determined expression in her eyes, and she dug one little heel viciously into the cushion it rested on, as she mentally vowed,—

"If ever I become Marcia Desborough, there'll have to be no more anxiety of this sort."

Yes—everything had progressed satisfactorily enough; and yet as he took the reins, and mounted to the box, preparatory to driving his guests home, it was noticeable that the brow of Sir Anthony Desborough was furrowed, as if with some secret sorrow. And although he kept his leaders' traces "taut" enough, and steadied the leaders themselves whenever occasion required, and double-thonged the wheeler who might betray a desire to shirk his work, it was evident that the usually cheery charioteer had something on his mind that afternoon. The *piquante* little French *Marquise*, who sat by his side, could hardly extract any but monosyllabic replies to her questionings. Her *cajoleries*, her *minauderies*, her fascinating little ways had no effect; so she eventually gave him up, with a shrug of her sable-covered shoulders, and abandoned herself to the consideration of a *toilette à ravir* for the morrow.

And Marcia, who sat behind her, next to Jack—the artful little puss had jockeyed a Warwickshire belle and rival heiress out of the seat just before they started—could not help inquiring of her neighbour,—

"Say, why don't the old man sell that black dog?"

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It was the same at dinner that night. The host was courtly and polite, but rueful of countenance and strangely silent. The conversation of the rest was carried on, for the most part, in undertones. It was as though some dark thunder-cloud overhung the banquet; and after the ladies had retired, with much rustling of draperies, to the drawing-room, Lord Arthur Bromley might well be excused, as one of his oldest friends, for approaching his host and inquiring, with a sound slap on the back,—

"Damitall, Desborough! what is the matter?"

The well-intentioned blow seemed to arouse the baronet from a dream.

"My good Arthur, and you too, gentlemen"—here he arose and bowed to the company—"I owe you a hundred thousand apologies. The fact is, I'm worried about my horse; and have a presentiment that something—something horrible, damnable—will happen to prevent his winning to-morrow."

"Bosh!" roared Lord Arthur. "I shouldn't have thought that *you*, of all men in the world, would believe in evil presentiments, after the practical experience you've had of the good things of life."

"Thompson," muttered a guest at the other end of the table, whilst "buzzing" the Lafitte, "is by far the best man to consult for the liver."

"Dear old dad," said Jack, rising and going to him, "don't worry about Rattlesnake. He

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and I are both fit enough to clear the top twig of any presentiment, in any country. He wouldn't have blown a candle out after he pulled up to-day; and I've wind enough to run twenty miles without stopping, and nerve enough to tackle a mother-in-law."

"Wait till you get one, dear old chappie!" laughed Reggie Ogilvie, ex-guardsman, who *had* got one, and a scorcher, too—unless rumour lied confoundedly.

"It isn't that, my boy," said Sir Anthony, "it isn't that. I don't fear for your wind and nerve, nor for the horse's fitness—until just beforehand. Listen, all. Twelve months ago, on the morning—within an hour or so—of this very steeplechase, Rattlesnake was poisoned!

"POISONED?" was the universal exclamation, as his listeners drew back their chairs.

"I have not, nor ever have had," continued the host, "the slightest doubt about the matter. My horse was wilfully and deliberately drugged. The evening before—I saw him in his box myself—Rattlesnake was fit to run for a kingdom, over National Hunt fences, or any other obstacles. He walked from his stable to the course as freely and jauntily as ever; but in the paddock, just before the numbers went up, I noticed, as he was being led round, how listless his gait was. His eyes had no lustre in them, and once or twice he stumbled so that he almost came on his head."

"I thought at the time he looked a bit overdone," observed Lord Arthur.

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"You thought right, Arthur; but he had been overdone with some drug. You saw him refuse in the preliminary that day—Rattlesnake, who since the day he left his dam's side had never turned away from any fence devised by Nature or man, wouldn't have a bit of a hedge that—damme! sir, a tinker's donkey would have cleared by at least a foot. And when he afterwards fell at the first fence—three feet of privet, with a ditch on the landing-side that you couldn't have buried a cat in—what could I think?"

"*I* always thought Sutton stopped him," said the man in the far corner, now well into another bumper of claret.

"I don't blame Sutton now," continued Sir Anthony, "although at the time I devoutly wished Jack had been in England to ride. Neither do I blame anybody connected with the stable. Every servant of mine must be above suspicion, or not another hour does he remain in my employ."

"Suspect anybody else?" asked Lord Arthur.

"No. There was no external evidence of poison—no tongue-swelling, no discolouration of the gums, cough, sore throat, nor anything of the kind. The man who compounded the stuff that settled my horse knew his infernal business only too well."

"But he's been all right since—the horse, I mean?" suggested Reggie Ogilvie. "I've a pretty distinct recollection of going to bed in my boots the night after Rattlesnake romped in

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for the Alltry Steeplechase at Limmerstone last December."

"Yes," said the host, sadly, "they let him win an unimportant race, with no money to be got on. But the Grand Smashemall! Man alive, there are thousands and thousands—I'm not talking of my own investments—depending upon the result. 'Tis the Blue Riband of the Chase. Either I have some powerful enemy, whom I may have unwittingly wronged, or I'm at the mercy of some of these infernal book-makers."

"Then there's evidently only one thing to be done," said Jack. "I'll not lose sight of the horse from the time he's led out of his stable till I have to go and weigh out, and then you, dad, must relieve guard."

"Yes, Jack, every precaution shall be taken. And now, gentlemen, since you will have no more claret, shall we join the ladies?"

Next morning Captain Jack Desborough arose betimes. This enthusiastic young sportsman, who could revel it, and dissipate it with the wildest of his brother officers, on occasion, had had "the muzzle on" for some weeks past. To ride the favourite for the Grand Smashemall was a serious matter. As much superfluous flesh and fat as possible must be got from off the well-knit frame; and a compensating amount of health and strength added to it.

He had taken a "gentle breather" afoot, three times round the park; and in returning

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to the house was reflecting on what the day might bring forth. His father's suspicions might not be altogether groundless ones. Although to doubt the integrity of Batters, who had trained for Sir Anthony for more than a quarter of a century, would be ridiculous, it was quite possible that the same brain that inspired the poisoning of Rattlesnake a year ago might be in active work now. So the young soldier must keep his eyes and ears open, for the next few hours at all events. There must be no "fooling around," as Marcia would say, this time, and—why, hail Columbia! Think of an angel, in a Paris frock! There *was* Marcia herself.

"Good morning, Captain Desborough!" cried a laughing voice from the terrace above. "Why, dear me, you look quite scared!"

"She's an *amazing* pretty girl," thought the young warrior, as he doffed his cap, and felt himself blushing like a schoolgirl.

She *was* an "*amazing*" pretty girl. As she stood at the top of two flights of stone steps, you could see a brilliant complexion—real, every bit of it—and a pair of expressive eyes, of the deepest violet, peeping out of what looked like a nest of fur; for the morning, though the sun was beginning to peep out, was chilly enough, and Miss Jerome, like all American girls, appreciated the virtue of wrapping up. Her plentiful tresses were confined beneath a mischievous-looking little toque of Russian sable; and beneath the silken skirts

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—lifted, as though the wearer was about to attempt the descent—was a liberal and delightful view of two high-heeled booted *tootsica* (the natural plural of *tootsicum*), calculated to riddle the heart of the stoniest of mankind.

And Jack did not come under this heading.

"Early hours, Miss Jerome!"

"Not for me, Captain. I always take a walk before breakfast, it's real good for the compl—I mean, it gives you an appetite for breakfast. But very probably it is early for you bad men who play cards and cry down your neighbours in the smoking-room till daybreak."

"I must deny that soft impeachment."

"You don't say?"

"I do. Brandies - and - sodas and late hours do not encourage perfection in steeple-chase riding."

"You bet! But say—in this ranche is it usual to hold a conversation with a girl standing a mile or two above you?"

"I apologise. Allow me to assist you down, Miss Jerome."

"Not if you call me Miss Jerome."

"Marcia then, if I may."

"Guess you may, unless you want to photograph me—thanks—don't go too fast. I've got three-inch heels under me, sir, and don't need a sprained ankle this day of all others—yes, you may admire my feet if you like—guess they've driven half the shoe-clerks in New York City to suicide—thanks."

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By the time they had reached the lower terrace Captain John Desborough was a "gone coon."

"I s-say," he stammered, "here's a seat; let's sit down."

"Let's!" was the laconic and ready reply.

"And may I always call you Marcia?"

"Yes, you dear old silly boy."

"Why didn't you say you l-liked me, before?"

"Because you never asked, stupid. Say, is this Leap Year?"

They had come very close together by this time; and there was a pause—shall I call it an interval for refreshment? The young lady was the first to take up the running.

"No more at present, sir. Now, about this race. I insist upon sharing your secrets, now that I'm going to be Mrs Desborough. What has scared your father, Jack?"

"He is afraid of the horse being poisoned. I'm going to ride over to Ambury Farm, where he is stabled for the week, directly; and I don't mean to lose sight of him till just before the race."

"And you'll take me with you."

"*You*, darling?"

"Yes, I order you, sir; I'm boss, and don't you forget it."

"But Diamond will be too fresh for you to ride?"

"Not by this time. I ordered my groom-boy to exercise him from six to eight this morning,

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to take the edge off his freshness. To say the truth, I meant accompanying you on this excursion long before you told me of it."

"You are an angel!"

"Not yet, I guess. But I am kinder spry, and if there's any detective work to be done, Jack, you bet I'm the girl to do it."

"Well, I am at your orders, puss. As you say, you're boss."

"And don't you look like forgetting it. Although I'm a society belle, Broadway, when set going, can work the rough racket as well as the Bowery. I was raised in the Blue Grass country, sir, and can spot crooked business as quick as anybody running a faro bank in 'Frisco. If there's any poison on the track of Master Rattlesnake, it's Miss Marcia Jerôme, formerly of the State of Kentucky, U.S., but now residing temporarily (for the sake of a certain foolish young officer of cavalry) at Desborough Court, Great Britain, Europe, who is going to find it out, and be down on the coyote with the drug like a tarantula. Seriously, Jack, let me have a hand in the working of this racket, and see if we don't break the slate together."

"But how about breakfast? we must be off directly."

"Fanchette, my French maid, brought me tea and crackers at seven. And *your* breakfast, Jack?"

"Jockeys never breakfast."

"You don't say? Mind, Jack, you'll have to quit this jockey riding when we're married."

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"You're boss, my ownest. And now run away, and let Fanchette fix you into your habit."

"Guess you might help me up those steps again—you needn't squeeze my waist so, although your arm is too long for it—how dare you? Well, if you must—guess I've had my breakfast!"

An hour or so later they reined in their horses at the farmhouse. The trainer received them at the yard-gate.

"Morning, Batters."

"Good morning, Capt'n, and my respects to *you*, miss."

"How's the horse?"

"As well as ever, sir."

"Did he eat up this morning?"

"Never left an oat in his manger. You shall see him directly, Capt'n. He's been 'set' this three hours, but his boy's going to give him his last dress over in a minute or two."

"What a beauty!" exclaimed Marcia, as a little later on they were watching a small boy vigorously grooming a fine upstanding chestnut, who looked all over like a winner. "How long has that boy been with you?" she continued, in a whisper, to the trainer.

"What, 'Snowy,' miss? Two years or more."

"Is he to be trusted?"

"With anything in the world—except, maybe, a cold plum pudding left within his reach by mistake."

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"Say," inquired the young lady, after a pause, "why does he give the horse that little stick to bite?"

"For fear the horse might lay hold of him, miss. It's the usual thing for a boy to do when he's dressing his horse."

"I should like to see that little stick closer," persisted Miss Jerome.

"Bring the stick here, boy," ordered the trainer.

"Sir?" cried the boy, his cheeks all aglow—doubtless the result of the violent exercise of grooming a thoroughbred.

"Bring the stick, d'y'hear?"

"Snowy" shook like a leaf, and then fell on his knees. "Don't 'it me, sir. Mercy, mercy!"

"Why, what the Halifax is the matter with the boy?" inquired the astonished Batters.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with the *stick*, at all events," said Marcia, who had meanwhile obtained possession of it. "It's smeared all over with some sort of paste. Do your horses usually have paste for breakfast, Mr Batters?"

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the trainer.

"Marcia, you've saved Rattlesnake," said Jack. "And now to punish the guilty."

"Murder! murder!" roared "Snowy." "I'll confess everything!"

"Guess you'd better," put in Marcia, who was by far the coolest of the party. "Before we decide to which of those tall trees out there we shall string you up, you've got to figure out the names of your accomplices."

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"Don't 'ang me, lady!" howled the wretched urchin, prostrating himself before Miss Jerome's riding-boots. "Don't 'ang me, and I will!"

When, that same afternoon, Captain Jack Desborough had successfully negotiated the last fence on Rattlesnake, he heard a silvery voice, on the other side of the rails, exclaim,—

"That's the last leap you'll take in single harness, sonny!"

The elaborate reports of the race for the Grand Smashemall given in the sporting papers all agreed that never had the Blue Riband of the Chase been won more easily. It was also hinted that the winner had been backed to win an immense stake, "although some of the leading metallicians (evidently inspired) seemed never to tire of writing his name." One and all writers congratulated Captain John Desborough, who was one of the most proficient horsemen of this or any other time, upon his magnificent handling of the favourite, and upon the acumen displayed in bringing him to the front just at the moment when the rival who threatened most danger was beginning to hold out signals of distress. Fitting compliment, too was paid, in the London and provincial journals, to the popular baronet—one of the best sportsmen left in dear old England—whose colours had been carried to victory by a horse who had at last set the seal upon his fame by taking the highest honours at Waterbury.

All the papers, moreover, recorded the fact

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that no sooner had Rattlesnake passed the winning-post a quarter of a mile in front of his nearest opponent, than a cry was raised on the Stewards' Stand that a gentleman had been seized with a fit. "This statement," said the special commissioner of *The Eyeopener*, "unfortunately turned out to be only too true. That astute Turfite and esteemed M.P., Lord Arthur Bromley, had been visited with a stroke of paralysis, which left him powerless to move hand or foot, or even articulate. The unfortunate nobleman, I grieve to add, breathed his last ere reaching the cottage close to the course to which he was being conveyed."

But none of the papers mentioned one word about the poisoned stick—the diminutive cane which some miscreant or miscreants had intended should convey death, or, at all events, temporary stupefaction, to the four-footed idol of the steeplechase world. In all probability the omission was due to ignorance of the facts. Had but a small portion leaked out, it is reasonable to suppose that the British Public would have had poison (or treatises thereon) doled out to it for breakfast for many a long month afterwards.

But the secret was well kept. And, as nobody had anything to gain by divulging it, this was not particularly wonderful.

The boy "Snowy" had produced a dirty and ill-spelt letter from the pocket of his corduroy small-clothes, which threw considerable light upon the affair. The letter ran as follows:—

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"DEAR FRENCH,—i ave putt the stuff hunder the Tre cloase again the pigg Sty there is too quid for yore trubble Has wel an more wen you Don it. The toff as plenty so no more at present from—yours obedent
HOPPY."

"Hoppy" was soon traced—not by Scotland Yard, for the police were not consulted in the matter—and was not long in divulging the name of his employer. Subsequently, upon being asked to choose between a bench of magistrates and a "good hiding," he promptly selected the latter alternative,

And the "toff"? The "leading metalicians" considered at the time that the sudden demise of Lord Arthur Bromley was most unfortunate—indeed, unfair—for themselves. For he was by far the heaviest loser by the victory of Rattlesnake; and the poor bookmakers who, acting upon his instructions and in his interests, had laid heavily against the horse, found themselves in the uncomfortable position of being "hit all round."

But, though his lordship's untimely death cancelled, by the unwritten code, his debts of honour, it is just possible that the metalicians would have been equally unfortunate had he survived settling day. The family solicitor, in fact, will tell those entitled to know, to this day, with a grim smile, that the lamented nobleman had been insolvent some time before that particular Grand Smashemall.

But Sir Anthony died without the knowledge

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that it was his "own familiar friend" who had "done this thing," and had tried to do it again. And it was the fair Marcia who observed on her wedding eve, for the thousandth time, to her boy of boys,—

"Say, why should we tell the old man?"

THE SEAMY SIDE

I HAVE occasionally been taken to task by my kind friends in front—otherwise known as the critics—for holding the mirror too closely up to nature, for describing men and incidents which show up in bold relief the rascality of racing and those connected with the sport. And some of my critics have waxed severely moral on the subject.

But what nonsense is all this! There are as many excrescences on other trades, occupations or callings as upon that of the habitual follower of the Turf. Black sheep are to be found in the army, navy, the profession of the law, the pursuit of commerce, and even amongst those who have been ordained to preach the Gospel unto all people. The Turf is neither better nor worse than any other pursuit; and the present author is not to be deterred from the telling of a good story on any moral grounds whatever. Who runs may read; and I hold no mission to write down to the level of the intelligence of the Pharisee, the Puritan, the Anti-gambler, and the Anti-vaccinator.

Bill Bathurst has now been dead for many years; but in his lifetime he was one of the most amusing of rascals. What he did not

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know about that noble animal the horse was distinctly useless knowledge. He was a bit of a farmer, a bit of a coper, a bit of a veterinary-surgeon and a bit of a jockey. His experiences of the ups and downs of life were, like Mr Samuel Weller's knowledge of London, "peculiar"; and in the early "eighties" I dearly used to love a chat with old Bill, who at that time had a bit of a farm in Berkshire, and did a bit of horse-breeding and a great deal of horse-dealing.

A JOB THAT FAILED

"I think I told you," once remarked the old man, "how I was once 'done' in the matter of a horse. You shall now hear how that happened.

"Which was the best horse I ever owned?' Well, I've had some useful ones in my time, but I think Whitehead was about the very best of which I was sole owner. I bought him cheap, sold him well, and, but for a singular chapter of accidents, should have won a large sum of money with his assistance. Here goes the story. Fill your glass, my lad; that ale won't hurt you. I get gout at my time of life, but that don't make me shy at a glass of good home-brewed; not it.

"Colonel the Honourable George Everett, who married the only daughter of Lord Wilkins, had a large property a few miles away from

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here, on which he resided many months in the year. I often met him out hunting, and he invariably passed the time of day to me. 'How are you, Bathurst?' and so forth. Well, on one occasion I was riding a horse of poor Herring's, we had a desperate run, and when we ran into our fox about a mile from Beecham Spinney, only the Colonel, the huntsman and myself were left of the large field. As we trotted home the Colonel told me he had something pretty good in horseflesh, which he thought would suit me; thoroughbred, and had been hacked by Lady Everett during the past London season in the Park. He had fallen and slightly chipped his knees, and her ladyship did not care about riding him again. Would I come over and look at him?

"I agreed, and next morning rode over to the Hall. I took the horse over a few hurdles, and, after a bit of chaff about buying a broken-knee'd one, I got him dirt cheap for forty guineas. Those, my lad, were the merry days of Kingsbury and West Drayton. Poor 'Count Bolo,' he and I were in many a little swim together. I have often thought it was a pity—even in the interests of the morality of the Turf, with which, you know, I have so much sympathy—that those meetings were disestablished; they were a sort of safety-valve; they enabled the little men to live, and they then had no temptation to take their horses and their own peculiar ideas of ownership to immaculate Newmarket, Goodwood, etc.

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"I was very careful with Whitehead, got him into prime condition, and then ran him at Kingsbury, just to find out what he was really made of. I meant having, at a small cost, a good trial, and with fairish horses. Old Parliament was then in first-class trim, I needn't tell you how good *he* was. You remember he ran second twice for the Grand National; but that was after the affair I am now telling you about. He was entered in a three-mile steeplechase, and I determined to have a cut in, never dreaming for one moment that my horse would have any chance with him. I usually, as you know, ride my own horses—in byes especially—but on the day I was not at all well—one of my dreadful headaches—so did not feel equal to riding. I put young Blank up; I knew I could trust him well enough, and I told him to take a feeler if possible with Parliament, but not on any account to win.

"As usual, Blowhard the bookmaker got what he could out of my horse; amongst other good bets, he laid 500 to 100 to a plunging flat, and I said I would stand half the bet with him, as fifty would pay my exes and something handsome to boot.

"Blank rode to orders, and, coming over the last fence, Parliament and Whitehead were close together, the rest of the field tailed off. Half-way up the hill what was my horror at seeing Parliament stopping to nothing, and Whitehead going so strong and well that he could have left him standing still. Blank, however, was equal

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to the occasion, there was nothing else in fact for him to do, unless he fell off. He dropped the reins, clutched hold of the front of the saddle, and began to swing from side to side as if in great agony. Parliament won, a policeman caught Whitehead, and then Blank quietly rolled off, and was carried by a sympathising crowd into the weighing-room. He soon recovered from his fit, a sort of vertigo in the head, he said it was. I heard one swell say to another, 'I expect it's only another of that infernal Bilker's dodges.'

"I didn't care two straws about the public, as long as the stewards did not interfere, and here nothing was said. Deuced plucky of Blank, wasn't it? Ah! it is wonderful what men can and will do in the interests of sport. After the excitement of nearly losing £250 had passed off, I began to think of the jewel I had got for forty guineas. I took him home, and, bet your life, I looked after him well, rode him myself in all his work, showed him the hounds, got a certificate for him as a hunter, and began to look around how I should place him. I never like my horses to eat the bread of idleness. I can't afford to keep cats unless they catch mice, and so ran him at several little country meetings, and he won whenever he started. At a little concern near Brighton he ran as Mr Fitzroy's Blackhat, at another in the North of England as Mr Duncan's The Tout; but it was at Oxbridge sports, where he won three events in one day as Mr Windbag's Treacle,

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that the best business was done. These sports, as they are called, are got up by the young gentlemen of Oxbridge. As the racing is not held under National Hunt Steeplechase Rules, any horses running there would be disqualified running at properly-constituted meetings.

"I wanted to sell the horse, and, as there are always a lot of 'early worms' at Oxbridge with plenty of ochre, I took him there, and by that day's performances got an offer at once for him. Risky, running him at such a place, you say. Oh, no; in those days there were so many at the same game, peaching wouldn't have paid; it would only have led to revelations and trouble on all sides. Besides, it paid those in the know much better to hold their tongues.

"Well, at Oxbridge I fell in with a lot of young swells, amongst others with two who were great pals, young Bowman, the eldest son of the Blankshire squire, and Mr Welshman, the only son of a wealthy landowner in Cardigan-shire. These two took a great fancy to Whitehead, and came over here several times to see if we could deal. I might have got a sum of four figures if I had been willing to take paper, but I hate paper. Had a good bit of trouble with it one way or another; generally, in fact, having been done with the stuff. I wanted coin, cash down. Well, it happened that one of them was coming into money the latter part of the following March, and it was on these conditions that I sold him. The price was to be £800, the horse to remain in my possession until after the

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hunters' race at Gentlemanville, in which I had entered him; they to lay me 3000 to a monkey that he did not win that race, and to have the market.

"Well, Mr Welshman would not agree. He said he was not a betting man, and would not lay any price at all against the horse. He walked out; and then Mr Bowman asked me whether I would take 3000 to 500 from him instead of from the two. 'Certainly,' I said. He called after his friend, who came in again, and the matter was so far concluded, Mr Bowman having said to me previously, 'As Welshman don't care about betting, it would be as well not to say anything about our bet.' I agreed. At the end of March the Gentlemanville Grand Steeplechase is run, a first-class meeting with a first-class ring. At that day many thousands could be won, even over a selling race, and it was in the Hunt Race, two miles on the flat, at that meeting, that I intended to bring off my big *coup*.

"Whitehead was as fit as hands could make him, and well, I was also in good condition and meant being my own jockey. There was too much at stake to trust to anyone else, and I flatter myself that then few men, even among the professionals, could have given me any weight. All the neighbouring farmers wanted to have a bet on him, and the commissions for 'fivers' and 'tenners' were so numerous as to be very tempting, but Mr Bowman's 'three thou.' was still more tempting. Of course there

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were some disagreeables about the affair. Bumpkin, who knew about the nomenclature business, wanted £50 on, and Blank £50, and so on. I sent to Edinburgh and Glasgow £200 in small sums to back Whitehead, starting prices, and I sent £200 to my brother Bob, who was then living at Sugartown, with instructions to wait for a telegram from me in the morning, and act accordingly. I got Whitehead, with a steady boy to look after him, safely vanned, and was just settling myself comfortably in the carriage when up comes little Canter.

"'Ah, William, going off to Gentlemanville?'"

"'Yes.'"

"'Well, put me £100 on Whitehead.'"

"'That's a big sum, Jimmy,' I said."

"'Not too big for Mr Fitzroy, I know,' and the villain grinned again."

"'All right,' I said. And to my great relief the train moved off, with the pleasant sight of that scoundrel writing down the bet in his book."

"The morning of the race arrived. I wired to Bob: 'Get on the £200 and as much more as you can,' called at the President Hotel, found out Mr Griffiths, bookmaker and commission agent, and asked him whether he would back a horse for me that day."

"'What horse? What race? and for how much?'" asked the great man."

"I told him, and handed him £500 in notes."

"'Good thing, eh?'"

"'Yes,' I said, 'it is. I'm going to ride myself.'"

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"'Well, don't make too cocksure,' said he. 'I've heard of one or two other pretty smart 'uns that will dust you up a bit; but I'll do your business.'

"It was, I believe, the biggest field which ever started for the Hunt Race—there were seventeen runners. As it was a question of many thousands for me, I did not care to tell Blowhard how good a thing it was, that's why I took my money to Mr Griffiths. Blowhard would have skinned the market, and the starting price would have been 3 to 1, or something like that. We got off the second time of asking, and I laid well up with the leading horses all the way to the straight. Rounding the turn for the run in, I saw I had my field beaten, not the horses, mind you, but the gentlemen riders. I knew I had won, so sat quite still, played with them all up the straight, come out at the stand and won hands down by three lengths. No winning cleverly by a neck or in a canter by a head for me, my lad, when I have the pieces down. I passed the scale all right, dressed, and went straight out of the weighing-room to my hotel, had a very modest repast, and early to bed. I slept that night the sleep of the just and deserving, the sleep of contentment. The London papers arrived about noon; I went to the station to meet the train, purchased a paper, and saw with pleasure that the starting price returned about Whitehead was 7 to 1. I rapidly jotted up all the items—Bowman's, Griffiths', Bob's and the Scotchman's—and

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reckoned that, after paying all friends *and* enemies, I should have something like six 'thou.' to the good. Off I went to the President Hotel and asked to see Mr Griffiths, and found that gentleman just finishing breakfast.

"'Ah! Mr Bathurst,' said he, 'that was a good thing of yours. Wish you had told me more about it. If you ever have another, and will let me know, you shall never want money again. Now I'll settle with you. I got you 4 to 1.'"

"'Four to 1!' I said. 'Why, the papers return 7 to 1.'"

"'Blank, blank, blank the papers and you too,' and then the air became hot with blasphemy; 'fours I got and fours I return,' he shouted. 'Take your blank money and go to Tartarus,' and he threw a heap of notes at me.

"I picked them up, and walked out of the room. Warm member, Mr Griffiths, I can tell you.

"'Never mind,' thought I, 'Bob's coin, the Scotch, and young Squire Bowman's will make matters all right.' I returned to my hotel, where I found Mr Welshman waiting for me. He paid me the £800. I gave him a receipt for the money, and said good-bye for ever to Whitehead. I journeyed back home, sent my vouchers to Scotland, and wrote to Bob to send me up the coin he had to draw over the race.

"Now don't laugh, pray; but just listen to how Bob got on. I told you he was living at

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Sugartown, a big city in the West; it was, and is now, a good place to get money on. Well, Bob had a friend, a man named Allison. He had told him he expected to have to do a biggish commission for me over Whitehead, but he should know for certain the morning of the race by telegram from me. The day arrived and Bob had just left his shop for a minute to have a drink with a customer, when in walks Allison, who asked for Bob. Mrs Bob said he had gone out, didn't know when he would be back; just then in came the telegraph boy and handed in my telegram. Allison said to Mrs Bob, 'I suppose that's the telegram Bob is expecting from his brother Bill, you had better let me open it and try and find him.' Mrs Bob said he might open it if he liked, and he did so, and left hurriedly, saying he would go in search of Bob. About half an hour afterwards Bob walks in, sees the telegram lying on the table, thinks Mrs B. has opened it, goes to his cash box, takes all the money he had, and goes to execute his commission.

"Now, the first house he called at was the Shining Moon; this was a safe place to plant a pony. So in he goes, and tells the landlord, who was also a bookie, what he wanted. 'Can't lay.' Bob rushed off to the Stag; here he was told the same. 'Can't lay, quite full.' Well, he had a drink, and went to all the cribs, and found at all that they were full against Whitehead; Bob couldn't make it out. He had a drink, sometimes two, at each place, and was pretty

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nigh drunk when he got home again. He did not wire to me, *he* says he was too drunk to do so. I expect he was trusting a bit to luck, and was fielding himself. Well, when he got home, Mrs Bob was at dinner. 'Seen Allison?' said she. 'No,' said Bob. 'Oh, he was here when the telegram came, and opened it.' 'What!' roared Bob, 'you let him open the telegram?' 'Well, I thought there was no harm in it; you and he are such friends,' replied Mrs Bob.

"The husband, drunk as he was, saw it all now, cursed and swore, and went for Mrs Bob. She screamed, the shop boys rushed in and Bob rushed out, not coming home again for two days. Mr Allison had skinned every bookie in the place for as much as they would lay over Whitehead. Bob sought him out, but he would not turn up a copper. Allison can date his present prosperity from reading that telegram. This was another blow—I was obliged to pay Canter, Bumpkin and Blank, for they had been told by me of the 'three thou.' I was to get from young Bowman. If I did not settle with them, they would have howled so loudly that he would have been sure to have heard if I had not paid, and perhaps have refused to part—so I parted to all, and for a few days I suppose there was no man more popular in this part of the country than myself. I had to pay at 7 to 1, that being the published starting price, and in that way old Griffiths' money and the Scotch listmen's went.

"Well, I had still the £3000 from Bowman

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to draw, and the next good thing I had I swore I would keep to myself. I expected a cheque on the Monday; it did not come, and the week passed away and I heard nothing from the young squire. I thought to knock against him on market-day, but he did not turn up. I was pretty savage, and enough to make me; everyone thought I had netted a fortune, and every poor devil I knew congratulated me, expecting to get something out of me. The parson here rushed me for a 'tenner' for repairing the church, but no one else got a copper. I could have swum in liquor, all my friends had won, and as I had paid *them* they naturally concluded I'd had a rare good haul. For my life I could not tell them the truth, I felt so much like a 'mug.' Not hearing from the young squire I wrote again, this time rather stiffly. Another week passed by—no notice—so I determined to seek my lord in his castle. I rode over to the Park, and asked to see young Mr Bowman. I was shown by a big flunkey into a room where my gentleman was sitting reading a newspaper and smoking a cigar. 'Ah, good-day, Mr Bathurst,' said he. 'What can I do for you?' 'Why,' said I, smiling, 'you can write me a cheque.' 'Write you a cheque! What for?' 'Why, for £3000, of course.' '£3000!' said he. 'Why, you take my breath away. Why am I to give you £3000?' 'Because you owe it me, Mr Bowman, over Whitehead.' 'Oh, you must be mad, man, to come here on such an errand. Go home, have your head shaved,

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tallow your nose, put your feet in mustard, take a bran mash, and go to bed.'

"I was that wild I did not know what to say. I stammered out, 'Surely you don't repudiate the bet you laid me—3000 to 500 against Whitehead winning the Hunt Race at Gentlemanville, when you and Mr Welshman bought the horse. I should not have sold him, you know very well, without the bet.' 'Mr Bathurst,' said he, quietly, 'I advise you to go home. Mr Welshman tells me he paid you £800 for the horse, and, in fact, I have seen your receipt. This bet is only an hallucination on your part. Mr Welshman knows nothing about it, nor do I. Take my advice and go home.' I began to swear and bluster what I would do and say in the country if he did not settle. He only laughed and got up. He's a big fellow, young, about six feet, all bone, sinew and muscle. Said he, 'There's the door and there's the window. Which will you go out of?' He rang the bell, the big flunkey came in. 'Show this gentleman to the door, James. Good-day, Mr Bathurst, take my advice, send for a doctor when you arrive home.'

"Now what do you think of that for a sell? For a real, right-down ramp give me a regular swell. His coolness, pluck and utter want of principle will floor the best of us. Slowly I rode home, thinking what I had better do. I stopped at the market town and consulted old Sharpshins, the lawyer. 'Well, William,' said he, after hearing all I had to say, 'it's his word

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against yours, no witnesses—better grin and bear it, and try to get it from him another time in another way. Don't make a fool of yourself by blabbing this story all over the country, you'll only be laughed at. Wait your time. I'll be bound you'll be even with him in a year or two.' I took Sharpshins' advice. I never got my £3000, but I hit Mr Bowman a blow in his pecuniary ribs some time after that he has not got over yet—but that's a long story. To think that after all my scheming I should only get £800. Why, Whitehead was so good that I'm certain I could have won the Chester Cup with him. Mr Welshman and his friend did no good with the horse; they took him to Wales, and over to Ireland, messed him about and ruined him. Well, here's the station; sorry you are obliged to leave so soon, shall be glad to see you again. Why, you are looking 50 per cent. better than when you arrived. I shall look you up in Fleet Street."

I parted with Mr Bathurst, who had finished his story as he drove me from his house to the station, and as I travelled back to town I could not help thinking that it *does* happen that the biter is himself sometimes bitten.

MINDING THE RING

PROTECTION FROM THE SCUM OF THE TURF

CONSIDERING the high prices charged for admission to race stands and enclosures, it might be supposed that the public who frequent those would be guaranteed immunity from robbery and personal violence from the dangerous classes who, like the eagles and other fowls of prey, are to be found gathered together whenever a "carcass" presents itself to the view. But although the novice may imagine that he is entitled to protection, on parting with his fee, he does not—or, at all events, did not—always get it.

The following sketch was written early in the "eighties," in the *Bird o' Freedom*, at a time when an ex-police-sergeant, named Ham, was employed by most race executives to keep the betting-rings as unspotted as possible from the world of robbers and other blackguards, who looked upon a race-course as their happy hunting-ground. Ham—if still alive—has long since retired into private—or rather "public"—life, and the race-course knows him no more. And the author has only to add to this introduction that, whilst the sketch is not

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unpossessed of "trimming," it is for the most part absolutely veracious. Ham, who in his time was a well-known tracker and taker of evil-doers whilst in the force, was a terror to the "scum" of the race-course; and, as the writer can testify, had more than one narrow escape of being, literally, slaughtered.

The scene is the betting-ring at Doncaster, and within a few short minutes the race, to discover the winner of which has set all the United Kingdom in a ferment for months past, will be brought to decision. The classic Town Moor is packed with a multitude of human beings, and excitement has gone up to fever heat. With the exception of the track itself, not a spot of green turf is visible for miles round.

Within the ring betting rages fast and furious. My eyes have for some time past taken in a square-built, wiry-looking individual of about the medium height, who has been flitting hither and thither all the afternoon. There is not much to notice in his dress, which consists of a dark tweed suit surmounted by a mackintosh, a black hat, such as is known to the trade as a "Peel," whilst stout leathern gaiters and serviceable shooting boots encased his nether limbs. His somewhat rubicund, weather-beaten visage is adorned with an ebon moustache and carefully - cropped whiskers; but the most remarkable features about him are his eyes. Small, dark and piercing, flash-

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ing like the Eddystone light itself, they seem to possess the peculiar faculty of looking every way at once, of seeing around the darkest of corners, and through the thickest of stone walls. Who and what is he? His attire bespeaks the agriculturist—a farmer, a grazier, or dealer in oxen maybe; but there is that in his appearance, there is a "something," a *je ne sais quoi* about him, which proclaims him to be no ordinary man.

On a sudden he approaches a tall, white-hatted bookmaker, at that moment engaged, like his fellow-craftsmen, in bawling out the odds. Being touched on the shoulder the penciller promptly descends from the leathern portmanteau upon which he had been taking his stand; but the next proceeding of the rubicund farmer, the agriculturist of the gaiters and the eyes, is a most remarkable and astounding one. Picking up the portmanteau, he promptly shoulders the same, and marches off with it in quick time.

My gentle reader will about this time be exclaiming, "Bah! what a rigmarole to lead up to an ordinary race-course theft." Bide a wee, my gentle one.

Instead of shouting "Stop, thief!" or at all events making some effort to secure his property, the bookmaker, with a crestfallen mien, follows the farmer and his booty at a respectful distance out of the ring and into the cloak-room itself, where the former coign of advantage of the six-to-fourer is handed across the

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counter to an attendant, who gives a voucher for the same.

So far from objecting to these proceedings, the owner of the property appears resigned to his fate, and merely murmurs imploringly, "Please let me take out them briefs, and our bit o' lunch, sir!" The secret is out. The portmanteau is a "place" within the meaning of the Act of Parliament; and the bookmaker has been openly, and of malice aforethought, infringing that Act. The portmanteau-lifter or "Peter-getter" (which, I am told, is the technical term) is none other than the eminent ring-keeper of the day, erst the terror of the felon, the scourge of the forger, and the cleverest thief taker in the detective police force; but now the sworn and fearless foe of the welsher, the ramper and the snatcher, the controller of the knights of the satchel and the sharply-pointed pencil, the "chucker-out" of the race-course, the all-seeing, the all-powerful, the valiant HAM!

"Good afternoon, Mr Gubbins," he observed, after discharging the above duty. "Beautiful day, is it not? Been watching me and that bit o' solid leather? Dash the man! Why couldn't he take a hint? They know perfectly well this is no place for a place like that. A portmanteau, a stool, an umbrella, a pair of crutches, or a pair o' clogs—it all comes to the same thing, and I'm not going to have any irregularities in my ring, whether it's Dick Dunn or Fred Fraser, or Fred anybody else.

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I've told that fellow three times that I wouldn't stand him standing on a stand—and talking of standing reminds me that I haven't had a glass of anything inside me since ten o'clock last night. You're very kind, Mr Gubbins, but I never touch spirits till after my dinner—small of ale, miss, please, and two tumblers, for a gentleman."

"Ah!" he continued, "mine's not altogether a bed o' violets. You've no idea of the trouble it is to keep a ring nice and sweet. I've got four men working along o' me (good, tried men, or I wouldn't employ 'em an hour), and we have to keep our eyes skinned, I assure you, what with the dodges those scamps are up to, and their makes-up. You'll scarcely believe it, but there's a snatcher in the ring at this blessed moment."

"Do you mean to tell me," I observed, "that there are not dozens of them inside?"

"Do I mean to tell you that I'm a fat, round-eyed lout of a youth, a blooming Juggins, that can't tell a brace of darbies from a coach-and-four? There is *one* snatcher, and only one, in that ring; and how he got in is a puzzle. I just got a glimpse of him while I was passing the time of day to Harry Treherne, but the fellow was off like a conger-eel. He must have mounted false whiskers and a beard, to come in with—but I shall nab him presently. And now you must excuse me. Happy to put you up to a wrinkle or two, at any time. I'm stopping private; but, if you're looking round at the

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Elephant to-night, I shall be smoking a— Well, of all the infernal cheek! There's my little snatcher over yonder, having a drink." And he hurried away.

Late that night I found Hawkshaw—I should say Ham—in the cosy bar-parlour of the Elephant, blowing a cloud, as though ring-keeping were as easy as lying in the sun and the welsher were as extinct as the Dodo.

"I don't look particularly like a man that has his life threatened twenty times a day in the racing season, do I?" he began. "But they don't say as much to my face. No, I've given one or two of 'em a sickener of that sort of game. They don't care about being buckled on a race-course and brought up next day, and have to find bail, with eight-and-forty hours' notice to the police, not much, the cowardly blackg—wha-a-a-at? Me feel nervous! Go along! I care no more for what such muck as that can do to me than I do about that hearthrug," and here he drained his glass and I ordered another, and one for myself. "They had a fair go for me at Shrewsbury, though," he continued, "some time ago. One of 'em went for me with a sort of half-bred jemmy, and they regularly stormed the ring. If it hadn't been for Lord Marcus and one or two more, I should have been in Queer Street, but I hadn't many to support me. At that time of year the blackguards are getting extra hungry, and the local police were worse than useless. The nearest squeak I had of it, how-

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ever, was the wind-up day of Kingsbury Steeplechases, when there were no constables, and the boys had it all their own way. It was a good job for me I was at Plumpton Coursing Meeting that day. As it was, they took some poor devil for me, and he had to be locked up in the weighing-room till the beggars found out it wasn't me. If it had been yours truly there wouldn't have been so much as a gaiter button left of him at the end of that day. If they wouldn't spare Bill Page it isn't very likely they'd have given *me* a wide berth. Am I right?"

"Perfectly, Mr Ham. But in your earlier days, when in the force, you must have had some exciting adventures?"

"Exciting? I believe you. Did you ever hear how I took Hezekiah Bramble, the great will forger? The blister was put into my hands to clap on him, and I tracked him all through the United States of America, and right down to San Francisco itself. I got there just a fortnight after he'd taken steamer for the Straits Settlements. Lost the trail at Singapore, but got it again at Calcutta, by the greatest bit of luck in the world, combined with judg— But I mustn't boast. Where do you think I ran into my man, sir? In an indigo factory, some way up the country, as sure as I wear boots. The beggar had got taken on as assistant overseer, and I nicked on to him one morning just before breakfast—as good as a brandy-and-soda for him, wasn't it? He was so surprised to see me,

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that he fell back into a great vat of indigo that was cooling down, and we had to fish him out with a tent-pole, six pocket-handkerchiefs tied together, and a shark hook. You never saw such a sight in all your life. Blue as Mr Jardine's jacket was that man from head to foot, and I made two niggers hold him in the sun to dry before I durst touch him, for fear of the dye coming off—ha, ha! They had to keep him in the after-hold all the voyage back, and feed him through a trap-door. There were several officers on board with *delirium tremens*, and the sight of a blue man might have made 'em jump overboard, see? That job stood me in a goodish bit, and I deserved it, for it was deuced hard work to get him identified in the state he was, I can tell you; and we had to make up his face a bit before putting him in the dock, for fear of his frightening the judge. Mr Gubbins, will you join me in another glass?"

I didn't cross his humour, and presently he went on.

"Then there was the curate that cut up his family—sixteen of 'em—and boiled 'em down in the copper. He led me the devil's own dance, and where d'you think I ran into him? At the Theatre Royal, Workington, where he was playing clown in a pantomime, so help me bloaters! Then there was the great poisoning case at Squasham-in-the-Dyke, with a farmer's wife at the bottom of it all, and the 'Smashers of the Southern Circuit,' as we called 'em, and the attempt to blow up Canterbury Cathedral, and

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the great bank-note robbery at Aspatria, and the wholesale suffocation of infants in Staffordshire, and— But, bless my life! if I was to tell you all the jobs I've had on my hands we should be here till to-morrow week."

"Touching this new system of half-crown rings. I am told that you ring-keepers do not exercise so much vigilance in that direction as in the more aristocratic enclosures. Is that correct?"

"Did you ever go in the gallery of a theatre, Mr Gubbins?"

"Occasionally."

"Well, I'll lay a wager you never found an arm-chair upholstered in pale blue velvet, or an antimacassar, or a footstool, or a young woman with black eyes and a white cap to hand you a Neapolitan ice up there, did you?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, it's just the same on the race-course. You wouldn't give the ragged lot that only pay half a dollar the same comforts and attention that you give the swells, would you now? I should want an extra pony a day to look after everybody—to say nothing of an extra pair of eyes. Not but what we take action, mind you, when it gets a bit too warm in one of those half-crown rings."

"Do you think welshing and ramping will ever be put down?"

"Do I think you can make strawberry jam out of broken bottles? All we can do is to keep it under—d'you understand? I don't know but

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what it would be a good plan to make the book-makers take out licences, the same as the cab-drivers and the publicans—but, bless your life, Mr Gubbins! where should *I* be if there were no bad characters to look after? Like the black man in the play, my occupation would be gone. As long as there's"—here he broke off hurriedly and rushed to the window "Well, this beats cock-fighting!"

"What's the matter?" I inquired.

"That man in the diagonal smother great-coat and brown deerstalker hat!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There he is, under the lamp-post this minute. It's my snatcher, sir—I've got a bit of paper in my pocket for that young gentleman—good-bye, Mr Gubbins, I must on to him at once."

And he disappeared into the night. When I met him next morning outside the Subscription Rooms, his first words were,—

"I made a bit of a mistake last night, sir. That man was the Mayor of Doncaster!"

SMOOTHING HIM OVER

"FRED CARROLL, the light comedian, was the most unpunctual person I ever came across in all my life. That young man, sir, in my early days as prompter, nearly drew all the hair off my head with his 'stage waits.' Talk about 'Men of the Time!' If ever there is a book written about 'Men *after* the Time,' Fred Carroll is bound to be the hero.

"As for rehearsals, it's a wonder we ever had any, as long as he was in the company. An hour or two seemed to make very little difference to Fred; and how he ever escaped getting his notice was more than I could tell. I suppose it was the easy, polite, light-comedy way he had of begging pardon afterwards.

"Everybody liked Fred who knew him; though, had I been a manager, I wouldn't have given him an engagement, even though he'd paid me ten pounds ten a week. The perpetual worry and anxiety would have sent me to the silent tomb before my time.

"I never shall forget that morning we were rehearsing the new piece at the Marylebone. What did they call it?—*The Dark Deed in the Old Toolhouse*, or some such name.

"Rehearsal was called for eleven. Twelve

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o'clock struck, and no Fred. I recollect well I was to have had a bullock's heart for dinner that day—a delicacy that you spoil, positively *ruin*, my boy, by overdoing. The clock struck the half-hour and the truant came not. My mouth positively watered at the thoughts of the treat my old woman and the girl would have without me to share it.

"I don't think I ever saw Lawrence Bolt—that was our manager—in such a rage before. He walked the stage as though panting for somebody's blood, and knocking the things about with his walking cane.

"At length he sent for the stage doorkeeper, and positively forbade him to let Fred in, when that unworthy should arrive.

"*'Ladies and gentlemen,'* continued Lawrence, *'we will commence the rehearsal without waiting longer for this renegade.'*

"At that moment Fred leaped airily upon the stage.

"He had come in by the front way, and round the pit—like the reckless, devil-may-care fellow he was.

"Our manager turned upon him like Richard III. *'And how dare you, sir—'* he was beginning, but Fred stopped him at once,—

"*'A thousand, thousand pardons, governor; and to you, ladies and gentlemen, the same number of apologies multiplied fifty times over! The fact is, sir, I left my hat on the sofa last night, and when I came to take it up—the hat, I mean, not the sofa—this morning—'*

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"'Confound your impudence, sir!' roared Lawrence. 'Why, you told us that fable about the cat kittening in your hat only last Tuesday!'

"'Dear me, how stupid of me. Of course I did. Well, as I was saying before, directly the 'bus-conductor heard my piercing cry, he stopped the driver. The two of them conveyed me to St Bartholomew's Hospital—it's as true as I'm standing in patent leather—where it took five men and a Sister of Charity to pull my shoulder in!' and the light comedian put on a look of the most intense agony.

"'Oh, dash you and your shoulder too, sir! You have fooled me to the top of my bent—but never again! Out you go, this time, sir, out you—'

"'What! when every clock within a radius of three miles from my lodgings had stopped this morning! and I've just come from a *tête-à-tête* with a charming widow—a countess in her own right—and she's going to take three private boxes every night, and give a bespeak on—'

"'Dash you and your countess, too!' yelled Lawrence. 'Out you go, or I will summon those who will—'

"'Oh, certainly sir, with all the pleasure in life!' and Fred bowed, as if the manager had promised him a half-clear benefit on a Saturday night—'I'll go out—but before I go, sir, I can't help mentioning that I was at the Princess's last evening—'

"What Lawrence put in here is unfit for publication.

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" 'And saw Kean play Hamlet—'

" 'Hamlet be bothered!'

" 'And—I wish I may never wear a moustache again if I'm not speaking the truth—*his business with the Ghost is not to be compared to yours!*'

"The manager was touched.

" 'Egad! you don't say so! Come and have a drink, laddy!' "—*From the Unpublished Reminiscences of a Prompter.*

“OUR JOCKEYS”

(BY ONE OF THE BROTHERS BROKER)

STONE-YARD, HOUSE OF INDUSTRY,
CRACKHAM.

IN happier days, before bereft of peace of mind and pieces, I have read several excellent articles in the sporting Press about jockeys. In the agony of my soul, I wish to let the false and holloaing world know something about *our* jockeys—about those ever-ready assistants to that stern fate which has left me a bruised, broken butterfly, reclining on a wheelbarrow (half full of flints), upon which, when the labour-master is bullying somebody else, I am enabled to indite these hardest of lines.

I am told by a casual acquaintance that there is a successful play now being performed, somewhere or other, bearing some such name as *Our Stable-boys*. May the success which never attended our jockeys in the flesh (occasionally “too, too solid”) be more kind to their biography—and be the means of securing to a toothless old wreck a copper or two for the purchase of snuff, small ale, the Sunday paper, and other luxuries for his declining years!

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I will begin with BENJAMIN (commonly called "Ben") BUSHEL, partly because the second letter of our alphabet is represented by the initials of his ever-to-be-reprehended name, and partly because he comes uppermost in my mind's eye when I brood upon my misfortunes, and the numerous occasions upon which he failed to mind his own eye.

Under what happy auspices was this bright specimen of a horseman called upon to take his place at the starting-post of life! Born in the picturesque village of Welrode, near the ancient city of Bucketham, his early diet consisted principally (so we were informed) of saddles of mutton and horse-radish, washed down by a frequent stirrup-cup. His fond and doting parents indulged in full many a day-dream of the highest Turf honours for their diminutive offspring, as he would bestride the towel-horse in the intervals of dinner. How artistically would he finish an imaginary contest for the Blue Riband! What side-binders he would bestow upon his deaf and dumb mount with the toasting-fork—occasionally to the no small detriment of his little sister's frontispiece and the china images on the mantelshelf! If ever there was a born jockey, said each and all of the worthy inhabitants of Welrode, it was little Ben Bushel.

I sincerely trust that none of these worthy inhabitants will be offended at my mentioning a fervent wish that little Ben Bushel had been a born jockey for somebody other than the

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wretched individual who writes this, or the wretcheder individual (my brother) who strangled himself with the supplement to the *Times*, in his cell at Oakham.

Never could youth have so belied the promise of his infancy as little Ben. Discharged from stable after stable, on the grounds of his singularly inadhesive properties (so we were afterwards informed), this fiend in tight trousers imposed upon our credulity with fictitious testimonials, and indifferently rode for, and effectually did for us, for the space of three whole (I had almost written "*hole*") months. We boasted no trainer, did my brother and I. No. *We* were not going to have our horses galloped out of their satin skins, and made "schoolmasters" of to the quadrupeds of a hireling's more influential patrons! *We* were not going to put ourselves at the mercy of some ignoramus, who might very likely combine dishonesty with his other disqualifications! There was a splendid training-ground, round a coal pit, in our neighbourhood—the neighbourhood of Wigan—and there we trained. What more could mortal desire?

Never shall I forget the circumstances attendant upon little Ben's first mount. It was on Pulled Bread, by Brown Loaf, out of a half-bred mare—the name, I should mention, arose in consequence of the daring feats of a former pilot of the animal, and jockey of ours—at Barrow-in-Furness. "Now, Ben," said I, "is your great chance. The eyes of the world, and the jacket

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of the decentest man in the world, are on you—and you are on twelve and sixpence to nothing. Keep your eye on the starter, and never heed the other horses. Ram the spurs in, and jump off in front—and mind you don't mistake a welsher's flag for the winning-post."

It will scarcely be credited by future ages—including the coming and intelligent New Zealander—how faithfully this prodigy carried out one of my final instructions. At the fall of the flag, there was *another* fall, thrown in, and Benjamin was thrown off. The heavily-potted Pulled Bread literally *came in alone*—our accomplished jockey, who had remained on the broad of his back, in the vicinity of the starting-post, upon the signal being given, coming in some ten minutes afterwards, and for the severest lecture it was in my power to bestow. But he was fertile of excuse, was Benjamin, as he was barren of jockeyship. The horse, he blandly assured us, had put his foot into a rabbit-hole—there had never been a live rabbit seen within a radius of ten miles, we afterwards discovered—and upon trying to recover his charge, this ill-fated jockey had been knocked clean out of the saddle by a pitman's dog, flung in the excitement of the moment!

How, after this explanation, could we, as humanitarians, refuse another trial to the dethroned one? How could we deny this unfortunate another chance of winning his spurs, and, possibly, some important event for the Broker stable?

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We gave him another chance. To be precise, we gave him many other chances. The Puddler Handicap at West Bromwich is green in my memory as I write. Our money was down, our own Ben was up, on Cauliflower. Gladly did we see the gallant horse speed past the post, a winner by some twenty lengths; and sorrowfully did we receive the intelligence that our grey had completed but *one* circuit of the course, instead of two, owing, doubtless, to somnious propensities on the part of our brave boy, who had failed to jump off at all, until the rest of the field had gone a mile and a furlong!

But why dwell on the exploits of this genius? Why should I particularise his triumph at Chat Moss, and his reckless indifference on that occasion as to pound leads? My ever-wandering mind naturally directs me to the culminating, the turning-off point in his career.

We had had but indifferent success with our gallant stable in the year 18—, and it was determined, in solemn conclave, to send an equine detachment as far south as Streatham.

It was the October Meeting, as I well remember. I had been entrusted, as the representative of the stable, with the care of a certain (or rather *uncertain*) two-year-old, and a five-year-old mare which we had steadily pulled (I do not blush to confess it—Providence help me, I am long past that!) the whole of the year, with a view to some little handicap at the "back end." The two-year-old was entered for the first race of the day, and his stable companion

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for the second. I had determined to execute my own commissions in the ring, so had left the management of the weighing and saddling department to the by-this-time-determined-to-lead-a-new-life Ben.

They said afterwards, both in the City, at Tattersall's, and in the haunts of Turfites generally, that my features, as I strode into the inner circle, were expressive of calm determination. Bet after bet did I book about Pink Window (my two-year-old) with apparent reckless indifference. I ascended that noble pile called the Stand, my transactions being finished. I was barely arrived on the top step, when the cry of "They're off!" resounded through the region.

Yes; Ben won, and far enough too. Only, unfortunately, in the excitement of the moment, *he had mounted the five-year-old mare, Matilda, and on her back won the first race, beating seven two-year-olds.*

I remember distinctly that on this occasion I was having boots made by Clicker of Stafford. They were clump-soled. I said but one word to Benjamin, accompanied by appropriate action on the part of one of Clicker's masterpieces,—

"Go!"

And he went.

DOGS I HAVE KNOWN

"IF so be as you would keep a dawg," observes a poaching expert in one of Whyte Melville's novels, "real sporting and dawg-like, master, let 'un know his distance; I strikes 'em whenever I can reach 'em. Fondlin' of 'em only spiles 'em—same as women."

There are those who in the catalogue go for men—and women—who fail to appreciate the amusement, delights and instruction imparted by the most intelligent of animals, the faithful friend of man. In Scotland the shepherd's collie but seldom leaves his master, whether in or out of doors; sleeps at the foot of his cot, and beneath his seat (with one eye open) in the kirk. In once-happy England the hatred of the animal, amongst some (alleged) superior beings, is such that kicks and stripes are his sole portion of the commodities of life; and he is kept, amongst more or less filthy surroundings, in a state of semi-starvation, for the principal purpose of poultry-murder, or burglar-alarm; being at the same time considered a standing danger to the public, on account of his tendency to go mad upon the slightest opportunity. Amongst the Mahommedans the dog is

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considered an unclean animal; and the Arabs implicitly believe an old legend to the effect that in the beginning the dog was the creation of Shaitan, who fashioned the animal out of a clay model originally intended for man, but left unfinished by Allah. In other Eastern countries the dog, although not experimented upon, and dissected, during his lifetime, as in Christian Europe, has a bad time of it, and is only supposed to exist for the purpose of scavenging the streets. In China the friend of man forms a favourite *plat* in the menu of the *table d'hôte*; in Belgium he is a mere beast of burden; and in Paris he wears diamond bracelets, and a gold watch, and has a special flunkey told off to attend upon his requirements.

My own experience of the canine race has been most amusing and instructive; occasionally pathetic, not unattended with danger, and even sensational. But, as a staunch dog-lover, I will yield to nobody.

"Topsy," otherwise known as "Toppits," was one of my earliest companions. She was only a mongrel terrier, white, splotted with lemon, and whose ears, which were bat-like and constantly erect, would have driven a specialist judge to alcohol, or arsenic. But there was more fun in that dog than the Hippodrome or the Gaiety Theatre would hold, and she would have cheered up any shipwrecked party on a desert island.

She was a soldier's dog, duly enlisted, her "shilling" being subsequently expended upon

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butchers' block ornaments; and she was accustomed, on festive occasions, to mount sentry, on her hind legs, with a forage-cap balanced on her head at the proper angle, and shouldering a miniature lance like a full-blown trooper. This feat was much appreciated in the regiment, save upon one occasion when an irreverent cornet stationed her outside the commanding officer's quarters on a "guest night." Then there was trouble.

As a "sitter-up" I never met her equal. At the words "Up, Topsy!" she would stiffen herself into the desired attitude and remain at "attention" until whistled for, although her instructor might have advanced a couple of hundred yards or so. But she once got the writer into hot water with certain dignitaries of the Established Church.

We were at home on leave, and had walked over the fields to the city of L——, some three miles distant. Shut in a stable the while her master was making a duty call in the neighbourhood, "Topsy" seized the earliest opportunity of making her escape. And the first covert she drew, in the search for the missing one, was the cathedral. I think this fact speaks volumes for the intelligence—to say nothing of the natural instinct—of the little animal.

Afternoon service was in full swing, and "Topsy" had penetrated into the very heart of the sacred edifice ere she was "spotted" by the senior verger. That official pluckily endeavoured to drive the intruder back by means

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of a frontal attack, which was exactly the strategy she liked best. At length having doubled on her pursuer, the intelligent little animal found sanctuary, amid hysterical titterings from the white-robed choristers, and audible protests from the occupants of the front stalls, immediately in front of the outstretched wings of the large brazen eagle which formed the "lectern." On the other side, half way through the First Lesson, was an eminent divine, justly celebrated for his soft, musical voice. And this had so soothing an effect upon "Topsy" that she then and there—sat up! And anon, wearying of the discourse before the outraged verger, with his silver club and his assistants, had viewed her again, the bitch had trotted off, out into the street, whence she made the best of her way home. All this was subsequently related to me by one of the congregation.

"The Borzoi and the Cat" is an anecdote possessing some amusing incidents, which might have led to tragic results. The Borzoi was a celebrity, in fact one of the first of his race to leave the land of the Tsar; and at the time of the incident the magnificent hound had well earned, at different exhibitions, the title of "Champion." He was nearly as big as Westminster Abbey; but he was a house pet, and having accompanied his mistress to a "musical afternoon," at which the writer was present, in New Malden, Surrey, had found a temporary reclining place beneath a table at one end of the dining-room. The huge hound was

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weary, and inclined for slumber; so was not aware, until later on, that on a chair which had been pushed under the same table, reposed a fine specimen of a Siamese cat.

At the other end of the room was the grand piano, around which were grouped the guests. A fair and well-known artiste was obliging with a sparkling ballad from *Paul Jones*, when lo! I beheld a sight at the other end of the room which almost caused my heart to stop beating.

The table, on which was a large lamp, alight, was slowly, but surely, being lifted from the ground. And a great shriek broke from the assembly,—

"The Borzoi!"

At the same moment a cat was seen to take a flying leap into the fireplace and to make record time up the chimney, despite the blazing coals in the grate. The wolf-hound, with a mighty struggle, emerged from beneath the table, the jerk upset the lamp, and the scene was ablaze!

With the aid of some hearthrugs and great-coats, we managed to extinguish the conflagration; and the cat came back—considerably the worse—covered with soot, and falling with a dull thud on the hearthrug. The Borzoi was all right, and, though keen on the chase, had hesitated to attempt to follow his quarry up the heated flue.

"And neither house nor furniture is insured!" gasped our host.

And then the lady went on with the ballad;

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the cat was sent out to be cleaned; and the Borzoi was accommodated on the hearthrug.

My next dog yarn is a tiger story; which may sound paradoxical, but wait till I get on with the tale.

Some twenty years ago, the writer made one of a shooting party entertained by "Tom" Cannon, peerless horseman and good fellow, who at that time resided and trained at Danebury, near Stockbridge.

We had capital sport; and after a high-class luncheon were walking up the birds in a big turnip-field. All of a sudden the most agonising cries were heard in the distance, of "The tiger! the tiger!" and two stablemen rushed up, breathless, and apparently terror-stricken.

"What nonsense!" said "Brother Joe."
"Tigers don't grow in Hampshire."

"Perhaps," hazarded another, "the brute has escaped from some menagerie?"

In another few seconds the tiger himself was distinctly seen, bounding through a belt of firs, and making straight for our party!

I never saw men run so fast. Anywhere, anywhere, out of reach of the furious monster! Hastily selecting what looked the easiest tree to climb, I was at the top of it within the twinkle of a pig's whisper, dragging my trusty gun with me. I had been in India, and knew full well that when a tiger is gavorting around the higher up the man is the better.

On came the fierce monster, and steadying my

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gun on a bough I aimed point blank for his heart. True, it was only loaded for partridge; but one pellet will kill, if it finds a resting-place in a vital part. Nearer and nearer came the tiger. I held my fire. Anon he stopped; sat up on his haunches, and—*barked!*

Barked! Peals of laughter came from the rest of the party, who were in hiding behind a hedge; and I knew then that I had been sold, by auction. The "tiger" was Tom Cannon's yard dog, an enormous mastiff, who had been painted, in black and orange stripes, expressly for the occasion. If there be one form of amusement for which boiling oil is too lenient a penalty, it is a practical joke.

Then there was "Trust." Shall I ever forget that sagacious animal? Old Jack Greaves, the "Tyker," of "Befnal Green," who "found" dogs for customers—when there was any demand for the dogs—described him as a "Middlesex span'l," and said if I didn't buy him I should regret it all my life. The animal looked to me more like a bobtailed sheepdog whose mother had made a *faux pas* with a greyhound, and who had been scalded all along the back in his youth.

"What's he good for?" I inquired. "Rats?"

"Good for?" he echoed. "Lor' bless ye! He won't leave a rat above ground, nor a cat neither. That there dawg can drove a badger as easy as eat his dinner, and he's faster nor any 'are what ever ran in the Battle o' Waterloo Cup, mister. I've shot over him myself when we was both younger, and if there's a

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kivey o' birds anywheres 'andy he'll put you onto it—ay! and rertieve 'em everyone wivout ruffin' a fevver. Warranted broke, by kindness, that dawg is, mister, and as a yard dawg or 'ouse pet he's invallable. He can a'most climb a twenty-foot wall, and can do pretty nigh anythink but talk."

He didn't look to me that sort of dog at all, but more like an animal who had been taken out and wilfully lost, to avoid the licensing fee. The sort of dog who would prefer to lie out in the sun and catch flies; or, when fed up and kindly treated, to chase a covey of partridges into the next parish, and make a meal of the best hare on the estate—after it had been shot. But there was a wistful look in that dog's eyes which sort of appealed to a man of sentiment; and I gave old Jack three half-crowns for "Trust," and fourpence more to purchase a drop of gin and peppermint, as the old man said he was suffering internally—or, as he phrased it, "infernally."

As a gun dog "Trust" was not a success; but he enjoyed himself immensely, and, besides running every living thing off my shoot, took a fancy to some of Sir Richard Dallison's young pheasants, which caused trouble, and came expensive, to save a prosecution. But the dog was a most energetic gardener, and destroyed all the early peas, besides scratching up some choice bulbs of the *Lilium Auratum*. He couldn't kill rats for nuts—or anything else; and when the ratcatcher caught and turned down

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three dozen or so on the premises, "Trust" only mouthed one, and that one by the tail. It was an old greybeard, and he fixed his captor by the underlip, drawing first blood. Eventually the rat unfastened himself and made off; "Trust" also making off, in the opposite direction. But he managed to bite off the tail of a ferret which had cost the ratcatcher "two quid as sure as I'm alive"; and the rest of the rats went and settled, and increased and multiplied, beneath my neighbour's pantry; and my neighbour called me names over the wall, and in the local paper.

He looked as if he would make a good watchdog. But the first night we tried him at that pastime a burglar came into the room where the dog and the plate basket were established, and carried off every spoon. And from the way the dog wagged his tail when I came on the scene five minutes later, armed with a Zulu knobkerry and the kitchen tongs, I was convinced that "Trust" had shown that burglar where the booty was.

He killed all the cats in the neighbourhood, and my fellow parishioners sent him strychnine through the post. He ate an entire brood of young turkeys, which I had hoped to rear for the market. He tore a postman's tunic; and when the policeman called he vowed he would truncheon "Trust," as suffering from rabies, the next time he met him loafing around.

But the last straw was piled on when Uncle Benjamin came on a visit; dear old Uncle B.,

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who was going to leave us all his pretty things, and tramway shares, in his will. We did our uncle well, you bet; and he was a *gourmet* if ever there was one. And the second night of his visit we had turtle soup for dinner, and "Trust" got between the legs of the pageboy who was putting the tureen on the table; and most of the soup was upset in Uncle Benjamin's lap. Up he jumped in his wrath, and "Trust," fearing reprisals, promptly bit him in the right leg. The old man left the house in a four-wheeler and a towering passion, twenty minutes later, and we never saw him again, nor his pretty things, nor his tramway shares.

Funds, just at this time, were urgently needed to buy a new organ for our church; and a bazaar was arranged, in order to supply the funds for that purpose. Everybody was asked to contribute, and I sent "Trust" securely fastened in an iron safe, ventilated, to be raffled for—twenty shares at sixpence each. I never heard who won him.

MR WILLIAM BATHURST AGAIN

HIS IDEAS ON THE GREAT QUESTION : IS HONESTY
REALLY THE BEST POLICY ?

GOING STRAIGHT

“GOING straight pays the best, you say ; does it? Well, perhaps you’re like the Scotchman who tried both sides of the game, and can speak from experience, but the question with me is, What *is* going straight? Am I, when I run my horses, to think of myself or the public? You know pretty well by this time in what estimation I hold the latter. I imagine that a man’s first duty consists in studying his own interests. He need not trouble about those of his neighbour. You may bet your boots that the neighbour will do you if he gets a chance, and that reminds me how a neighbour and friend of mine did me, and how I returned the compliment. I may as well tell you the story.”

And rare old Bill Bathurst, having knocked the ashes out of his pipe, placed it carefully on the mantelpiece, and started on his narrative.

“My little chestnut mare, Sapphira, was well in a handicap at Bath. She was very fit at the time, and I thought I should let her spin, as,

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with a small outlay, I could win a nice stake. But I always like, if possible, to make matters about certain. Now, my neighbour, Mr James Buster, commonly called Jim Buster, had a couple entered in the same race. The Giant and Ladykiller. One morning, when he was out with his team on the Downs, I asked him what he thought of doing in the handicap at Bath.

" 'Well, William,' said he, 'it looks to me as if your mare had a great chance, on her Sauce-town form. If she can do my two it ought to be a pinch for her. Perhaps we'd better have a spin and find out.'

"I agreed: and the following morning the trial came off, Sapphira winning rather easily from The Giant, with Ladykiller and another a good bit behind.

" 'You see, William,' said Jim Buster, 'The Giant could do the trick with your mare out of the way. What shall we decide to do? We can win with either.'

"Sapphira had a bad public character—she was thought to be a jade, though a gamer bit of stuff never carried leather, and as I seldom invested very largely on her, the price returned was always long, so I suggested that we should run all three, and go for Sapphira, as I pointed out to Buster that we were certain to get a fair price, and might land a good sum.

"We went to Bath with that determination. Arrived on the course, we met, and then and there agreed to have a 'monkey' on between us, Buster undertaking to get the money on, for we

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thought it would be better for me not to back her personally. Our race was the last on the card, and ten went to the post. Sapphira was ridden by Buster's crack lightweight.

"It was only a five-furlong spin, and I told the boy to come right through with the mare, not to cut it too fine, but to win as far as he could. I've always found it suicidal policy to tell a little lad to draw it fine and win by a neck or so. It's a hundred to one the boy loses his head, and gets done at that game by some old jockey; besides, boys always ride best when they are told to come along.

"I went to the balcony of the Grand Stand to watch the race, after inquiring of one of the Leviathans as I passed through the ring the price of Sapphira. He offered me eight fifties. 'Nonsense!' I said. 'Why, she hasn't got a 20 to 1 chance;' and passed on to the Stand, thinking what a comfortable amount the 'monkey' would turn in. After a couple of false starts the field got off well together, and I soon saw Sapphira's white face bang in front, next the rails, coming along a rare bat.

"She led to the commencement of the Stand railings, when she was challenged by The Giant and an old 'un named Brutus. The Giant could not do her, but that brute of Tom Pips's, who also trained close to me and Jim Buster, came with a rattle and beat her by half a length.

"I felt very bad, to lose £250 over what looked a certainty was hard lines. I could not understand my mare being beaten by such an

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animal as Brutus. I felt certain she could give him weight, and here they met at an advantage of 10lb. on the part of the mare. The boy, with the exception of making too much use of his whip, appeared to me to do his best.

"Presently, I felt a tap on the shoulder, and, on turning round, I saw Buster, who said, 'Fortune of war, William. Deuced bad luck to be done like that, and by such an ill-looking brute, but I suppose he's like a good many others—much better than he looks. I hope,' he went on to say, 'this won't inconvenience you; it's a good bit to drop over a race.'

"'I'll give you a cheque before Monday,' I said; 'it's no use crying over spilt milk. We must get it back some other day.'

"I took Sapphira home, and after a few days' rest I rode over to Tom Pips's, and asked him to let my mare have a spin with his horse; but he refused, saying it was no use. The fact was they were all a bad lot.

"'Why,' said he, 'I'll sell you Brutus for fifty.'

"I went to the stables with him, and had a good look at the old horse. I thought I knew where I could place him at a profit, so I offered Pips £40. After a deal of haggling I got him for that, and, borrowing a stable-lad, I sent him to my place at once. I kept him in work for a month, when I had him stripped with Sapphira, and tried them at the weights they carried at Bath, and positively he could hardly see the way the mare went.

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"It was a farce of a race. I never, 'pon my word, ever gave a thought about anything being wrong. I never for one moment doubted Jim Buster, nor should I ever have done so if one day I had not met the boy who rode the mare at Bath, coming over the downs, crying fit to break his heart. I asked him what was the matter, and he told me that Jim Buster had 'hided' him.

"'What for?' I inquired.

"'For nothink,' said the lad.

"'Ah, that's what you all say.'

"'Mr Buster lost his temper, and pitched into me shameful,' said the boy. 'But I ain't a-going to stand it; I shall tell on him, the great brute, a-breaking a ashplant over my back.'

"'What do you mean?' I asked.

"'Well, I pulled your mare at Bath, for one thing.'

"'What?'

"'Yes; I could have won in a canter, but I stopped her for Brutus, as my orders from Mr Buster was.'

"'You're a clever lad to be able to stop a horse and me not to see it.'

"'I don't know nothink about that, I only know I stopped her.'

"Of course, I knew well enough that a clever performer could do wonders in the 'Armstrong' line. Many a one I've pulled myself, almost on the post. 'Better not,' I said, 'say anything about telling me; I promise you I'll be even

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with him some day.' And I gave him a few shillings and rode on. The boy was a good boy, lots of pluck, and rode well, and he would have made a name for himself; but he had been brought up in such a rotten school that when he was out of his time he soon went to the bad.

"As I rode along towards home I had what the Frenchmen call a bad quarter of an hour. I had been done neatly and thoroughly. Jim Buster had trousered my £250, and stood in with Tom Pips, doing me in every way. I felt that I had paid a bit dearly for my confidence in a friend and neighbour, but, thank goodness! I'm a patient man. Patience is a virtue I possess in a remarkable degree. I could wait, and wait I did, for a couple of years, before the opportunity came for me to be even with clever Jim Buster. There's no mistake, I had my work cut out to do it, for he's about as wide as they make them; but the time did come, and I was equal to the occasion. Jim Buster had a large stud to look after; he trained for several little men. He was usually lucky enough to have one or two pretty good 'uns, but this year I'm now speaking of it happened he had an unusual number of smart two-year-olds. The best was Lucifer, who was nearly good enough to have won a classic race. He had been run out for his engagements, but Jim had "readied" one youngster for a back-end nursery. This was Bellringer, and he had great hopes of bringing off a great *coup* with the colt. He had run half a dozen times, and never shown at all

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prominently, and when the weights came out for the Great Nursery Handicap, run at Guytown, with Lucifer top-weight, 8st. 12lb., and Bellringer 6st. Buster was in high glee.

"During the two years I had been capital friends with my neighbour; in fact, I rode several winners for him in small races, for at that date I could scale 8st. with comfort, and, as I was always in condition, Buster was glad enough to get me to ride for him. Now, it was determined that the Guytown Nursery should be the hay and corn race for the stable. Everyone connected with it, and those owners whose horses were worth training, were to get their winter's keep, myself included, for Buster had asked me as a personal favour to ride Lucifer. It was known amongst us that if the affair were properly managed the public would rush on and back Lucifer, so that it would be pretty certain to start favourite; the stable money could then be got on Bellringer, and a big stake won.

"Buster, however, to make things sure, tried Bellringer with a three-year-old which had just won a good race, and the youngster in my hands won very easily. I had ridden Lucifer once before, and knew him to be a very smart colt, and I suggested to Buster that he should try him with Bellringer before we put our pieces down. Early one morning, just at day-break, it being late in the autumn—the light was very faint—the two colts and the three-year-old were stripped and Bellringer won again. It now only appeared a question of health for the

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colt to be certain to win at Guytown. I had ridden Lucifer in the last trial, and Buster complained that I had punished the horse too much and unnecessarily. His sides were ripped up with the spurs.

"'It's no use knowing half,' I said; 'we can be satisfied about the Nursery. I don't care about riding, you'd better put Blank up.'

"But Buster would not hear of that. He could trust me, he said, and with that I agreed to ride Lucifer.

"When we reached Guytown we proceeded at once to the course, and I donned the brand-new colours provided by Buster. Lucifer looked perfection, and I was regularly mobbed by the crowd. Buster had retained a crack lightweight, to ride Bellringer, and a large field (nineteen) went to the post. Previous to the meeting I had dropped a line to Blowhard, the bookmaker, who worked with me in all business matters, and told him what to do, and one thing he was not to do—that was to speak to me before the race. I was very careful to make my instructions clear. He replied that he would do all that I asked, and knowing this I rode down to the post in a happy state of mind. As was surmised, Lucifer was soon a hot favourite; then three or four others were backed, and he went back a bit, and when it was noticed that the Buster party were backing Bellringer, then Lucifer was almost knocked out. He was, however, backed again, and finally left off at 10 to 1 offered.

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When the flag dropped I got off well in front, with Bellringer close beside me. I let Lucifer stride along for a furlong, and then took a pull at him. At the half-mile post I saw I had my field beaten; Bellringer was leading by about a length. I was lying about four or five lengths from the second. The race was six furlongs, and a hundred yards from home I was at Bellringer's girths. I heard the yells in the Stand, and, shaking up Lucifer, I was at once at his head. I only had to sit still, and I passed the post winning in a canter by a neck. I pulled up and trotted back to the weighing-room. Buster came running up to meet me, looking death at me. I trotted on, taking no notice of him till I reached the door, when I dismounted, got the saddle and cloths well in my grasp, and turned to go into the room.

"Buster and his son, young Jim, stood on the steps. Said the old man, 'What the Hades—' I saw old Lord Choker, one of the stewards, standing by, so I said out loud, 'What did you say, Mr Buster? You thought I should have stopped the horse? If you want anyone to pull your horses, you should not ask *me* to ride.'

"I jumped into the scale and was passed 'all right'; from there I went into the jockeys' room to change my togs.

"When I came out there was old Buster and his son, looking the picture of misery, listening to the congratulations of Lord Choker, who, being rather deaf, had not heard my remarks.

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"'Yes, Mr Buster,' said the nobleman, 'a very fine race, a very fine race, indeed. I congratulate you on possessing two such good horses. Quite a treat nowadays to see two horses from one stable making a race of it.'

"To win with the 'wrong 'un' is an unpardonable stable offence, and as I had been guilty, wilfully guilty, of this crime, I knew I should never again ride for the Buster stable; but I had no wish to do so. Blowhard had invested £100 for me on Lucifer. He returned me 8 to 1, with which I was quite satisfied. What he got out of Bellringer he did not tell me, but it must have been something handsome, for whenever I see him he always asks 'if I've got another Bellringer for him.'

"The *fiasco* of this race nearly settled Jim Buster. Swear as he would, not one of his masters believed that he had not sold them. The very fact of putting me up was in itself convincing to many of them. Buster was very violent in his language and threats when next I met him; but I was not in the least afraid of him. I knew he dared not make a public row of the affair, and after he had exhausted his vocabulary of abuse, I said, 'Jim, I paid very dearly two years ago for a Bath bun you sold me. You ought to have been sharp enough to keep my fingers out of this Guytown pudding.'

"Good lark, wasn't it? Going straight, pah!" And Mr Bathurst shook himself violently, previous to filling a fresh pipe and reaching for the ale jug.

THAT OTHER FELLOW

IF I can only get hold of him—and I'm sure to one of these days—I shall do him a frightful injury.

The world is not big enough to contain the two of us. In other words, my peace of mind—nay, my whole existence—wills it that he shall die.

It's bad enough to have a butcher brandishing a knife a yard long, running after you in the street, and demanding prompt payment of three and sevenpence three farthings. But I can get over that. When, however, it comes to a cabman accusing you, whilst out walking with your maiden aunt, of having defrauded him of his legal fare, by coming the "Burlington Arcade double" on him—in other words, "bilking him"—you begin to arrive at the conclusion that the joke's being carried more than a little bit too far.

It's awkward enough to be taken for somebody else at the best of times; but I will *not* stand being taken as far as Holloway Prison for this double of mine, whoever he is—and shut up in a cell until the arrival of my solicitor. I'd bring an action for false imprisonment against the authorities, if it wasn't for my whole

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time, attention and fortune being required for the pursuit of that other fellow.

What makes the matter worse is the inward conviction I have that he knows of my sufferings on his behalf, and gloats over them; that he is an invisible spectator of my numerous humiliations and chuckles over them in his sinful and unpaid-for sleeve.

It was only a month ago that I was done out of a certain ten thousand, through the confounded resemblance I bear to this fiend in human shape. Uncle Roger's not half a bad sort, but he is what is called "a man of the highest principles," and goes to church twice every Sunday; and after that dreadful female with the baby had had her say—she ran half way down Bond Street after us—he would listen to no explanations whatever on my part, but, hailing a four-wheeler, waved me off with his cloth-gloved hand, as one who would say—"Never be nephew of mine!"

Not content with ruining my pecuniary prospects, that other fellow has done me out of the prettiest and the nicest girl in all Bayswater for a wife. What girl of spirit will tolerate "another Richmond in the field"—even if the other Richmond has been abandoned to her fate by you? And that drivelling idiot of a lawyer's clerk—he was the ugliest young man I ever saw, what with a wart on his nose and a bad squint—served me with a writ to appear in the High Court of Justice, Common Pleas Division, in a breach of promise suit, just as I was about to

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take Araminta Maria and her mother to the opera. Of course it was no good my trying to explain; and the black eye I gave that lawyer's clerk only made matters worse. But when did a woman ever listen to reason?

Oh! If I only had that other fellow—that demon of all iniquity—here, I'd—

Things have really got to such a pitch that I hardly like to go out. I've serious thoughts of having a label pasted on the back of my greatcoat, with some such inscription as this :—

"KNOW ALL MEN, BY THIS PRESENCE, THAT I AM CHRISTOPHER TOMLINSON, AND NO RELATION TO A SCOUNDREL, NAME UNKNOWN!"

But then, what with the horses shying at me, and the boys shying at me, my state wouldn't be so very much the better.

It's horrible, it's positively infamous, this persecution. I'll write to the *Times* — I'll employ myriads of sandwich men to ventilate my grievances—I'll go abroad—I'll take a trip to South America—I'll take prussic acid, and end my sorrows!

No, I won't—I'll go and see the chief of the Criminal Investigation Department at once.

This is the last straw with a vengeance.

I've been to Scotland Yard; and what do you think was the first thing they said to me?

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"You're the very man we've been looking for, this long time, for forgery!"

As soon as I get out of this cell, I'll send my piteous narrative to the Press, and then perhaps that other fellow may be hunted down and annihilated.

AN OLD BETTING-BOOK

A SHAMELESS AND IMMORAL RECORD

THE volume was not in the writer's possession in the days of old, when the accursed lust of gain by means of speculation on the strength or speed of that noble animal the horse first possessed him.

It was through no fault of the Eton masters that my contemporaries beneath the lofty shade of Henry were such a "fine sporting lot." What is bred in the bone is pretty sure to come out in the flesh; and many of our ancestors had owned celebrated racehorses of their own, and had played "the great game" right merrily. But we are not encouraged to follow in their footsteps; and about the severest "swishing" I ever received at the strong right hand of worthy Doctor Charles Old Goodford, was for assisting at the "sport of kings" on the royal heath at Ascot. It took two brand-new, profusely-budded birches — now hung in a conspicuous place in my billiard-room — to adequately fit the crime; and I could still tear my hair with vexation when I recall the fact that none of the school authorities would have discovered the outrage had it not been for the lying lettering on an omnibus, into which I had

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jumped, at the conclusion of the racing, under the impression that it would land me in the royal borough of Windsor — as marked in plain English — and from which I was ejected at Egham. It is a far cry from Egham to Eton College, and as I had to walk all the way I was some three hours late for "lock-up."

I had no betting-book in those days; such transactions as might take place with reference to wagering being usually recorded on the back of some old envelope, or on the fly-leaf of a school book. And thereby hangs another tale of woe.

When a boy was called-up in school, to construe or recite, it was customary for the master to borrow his book—in case opportunity should offer for a furtive glance at the text. One morning, whilst we were studying the beauties of the Greek Testament, my name was called, and the sacred volume was handed up to the Reverend Mr Birch. This worthy had a roving eye, which seemed to survey every page in the book at one and the same time; and as I was laboriously ploughing through Chapter III. of the Acts of the Apostles, I was suddenly startled from my base by a query from the terrible voice of the pedagogue,—

"What is *this*, sir?"

His eye had lit upon a pencilled memorandum on the title-page.

"Please, sir, I can't tell till I look at it."

The volumewas handed to me. A pause—then.—

"Please, sir, it's something about a—a horse, sir."

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"Ha! a wager?"

It was of no use to deny the fact. Later in life I had learnt a much easier and shorter method of booking bets; but there it was, in bad, bold writing, in all its shameful sinfulness—enough to hang me. Fool that I was not to have torn the leaf out!

"Montmorency bets me three shillings to one that Beadsman will not win the Derby, and I bet Montmorency one shilling to three that it will. Montmorency is a silly ass!"

I soon knew my fate.

"I shall complain of you, sir, and you will be soundly whipped at my special request to the head master. And remember, Gubbins *minor*, that the boy who bets in shillings will, when he becomes a man, bet in sovereigns!"

We all trembled. And this moral flashed through my mind, many years later, at London Park, after I had invested a "monkey" on a horse who was beaten a short head, in a selling hurdle-race.

Beadsman won the Derby; but what intensified the corporal punishment I received was the fact that my schoolfellow never paid me the three shillings. Montmorency was not such a silly ass as he looked.

Ten years later I possessed a betting-book.

The old brass-bound ("richly gilt," the vendor called it at the time) volume has been long since laid aside, and is dusty, and its edges

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overrun with verdigris. For years it has reposed in a drawer of my *escritoire* (a blessed word is *escritoire*), together with locks of hair of various hues, letters, the ink on which is faded to *café au lait* colour, a tangle of salmon tackle, a silken jockey's cap, an imperfect pack of cards, my first writ, a ball programme or two, a tiny satin slipper, a long-since-withered rosebud, a dog muzzle, an infallible recipe for indigestion, a knot of cherry-coloured ribbon, a cube of green cue chalk, and many other interesting relics. But as to-day I turn over the leaves of the old book, the soul within me is stirred strangely. A lump comes up in my throat as I recall the glorious past, when the world went excellently well, and we—we who had health, vigour and expectations—went just as well as the world. None but these eyes shall ever pry out all the mysteries of that ancient volume; unless my executors betray their sacred trust, and barter the work for cash, to pay my just debts.

The year 1868 was a memorable one in more ways than one. Racing men who can throw back as far will tell you that it marked the decline and fall of the Hastings empire; and that a racehorse who, "on the book," and as subsequent events bore out, would have won the Derby bar accident, was struck out of that race, when sound, well, and backed by the public, less than twenty-four hours before the great race was decided. Such things are not done nowadays on the Turf; and it is well that they are not.

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I had opened a book upon that great race some months beforehand, and although many of the entries in the old volume are illegible, whilst others seem to betray the fact that they were made after dinner, I can recall quite sufficient matter for the purposes of this article. It was my first attempt at bookmaking in the land of my birth. True it is that, a year or so before, I had defended the field for the Calcutta Derby, whilst sojourning for a space in the City of Palaces. But that experience, although luckily a pleasant one, was not encouraging to a man who might wish to live by the making of books. For I could lay but one horse in the race, to lose 100 gold mohurs (£160), and he was only beaten a neck. I was all right that time, but, until the decision of the race, I stood on assegaïs rather than on velvet; and although Chowringhee, the fashionable quarter of Calcutta, was painted carmine that night, I never again posed as a metallician on the coral strand of Ind.

"C is for the cheers heard to-day on Epsom Downs,
And D it is the Derby to be henceforth called Blue Gown's,"

sang poor Harry Sidney at Evans's afterwards; and it was on Blue Gown's Derby that I made my first and only regular book. I belonged at that time to a high-toned club, in which we feasted, and sang, and-gambled, and played "everlasting" pool until the glorious lamp of heaven had flooded the billiard-table with its life-giving rays. Cremorne and the dear old

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"Duke's," too, were in full swing at the time. Money was of no object to any one of us—until the Johnny with the writ came and took him to Bream's Buildings—and we didn't know the meaning of the word "to-morrow."

Yes, I made a £500 book on that Derby; took on all comers on the mandarin or "nod" system, at the club, the "Duke's," amid the blare of the band, the pop of the corks, and the splutter of the fireworks, away down Fulham way; and as I munched my hot-pickle sandwich and sipped my breakfast brandy on the Derby morning, the delightful reflection broke in upon me from time to time, that I had laid everything but "the mare."

"I don't care what else you've done," a big bookie (professional) had remarked to me on the previous day, "you've got a good book if you haven't laid the mare."

"The mare" was Lady Elizabeth; of whom I could tell you as much as anybody now alive. I have, moreover, told a lot "in another place."

I had laid all "Sir Joseph's" three—to Barrett of the Braggarts. Poor dear Barrett! The last time I saw him he swore that he would fight rather than drive me again in his cab from Romano's to Anderton's Hotel for a bob.

"200 to 18 agst. Rosicrucian. Barrett.
200 to 12 agst. Green Sleeve. Barrett.
100 to 5 agst. Blue Gown. Barrett."

These are the entries, clear enough; the bets

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were made after breakfast, whilst we were both staying with a bishop down in the West country.

There are ten or twelve pages in that old Derby book, filled; but the only horse that I appear to have laid "to the extent" was Paul Jones. Here is the record:—

"500 to 40 Paul Jones. Heming."

I laid that bet in the billiard-room of the Grosvenor, at Chester, a few hours after Paul Jones had romped in for the Chester Cup. "A horse with those forelegs will never win a Derby," I had prophesied to myself; and I was right.

I kept Speculum to run for the book, and backed it "in" as well. And an hour or so before the race I seem to have accepted odds that "the mare" didn't win. For I find, as my last transaction over that Derby:—

"40 to 60 Lady Elizabeth. Clark."

Well, had King Alfred won instead of being second, had "Jockey" Norman bested The Brusher in the final struggle, I should have had a fair "skinner." Had Speculum won instead of finishing third, I should never have wanted money again. As it was, Blue Gown was the recipient of the verdict, and my book panned out thusly:—

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"Took . . .	£376
To Pay . . .	£100
	<hr/>
Bal. Won . . .	£276"

I liked the look of "Bal. Won" so much that I arranged to furnish a house—a sweet *piquante* little nest in Park Village East—for the eldest daughter of a French *curé*. Her poor mother had been one of the *haute noblesse* in the palmy days of Louis Philippe. I also started a cab, and a 3st. tiger, and took a box for the season at the Strand, where the *Field of the Cloth of Gold* was still running.

But soon was apparent a rift within the sweet lute. The canker-worm commenced to eat the bottom from out that Derby book. The only bets in it which have to this day been adjusted were the Speculum ones, and the three I laid to poor dear old Barrett. And it took the assistance of an oily old Hebrew, with a cataract (or something of the sort) in one eye, to do this.

No more Derby books, thanks. In 1869 I had blossomed out into a *bond-fide* backer; and rare havoc was made amongst the layers, whom the efforts of Mr "Geordie" Anderson had at that period caused to take refuge in the "unco guid" city of Glasgow. I was sojourning north of the Tweed in the early spring, during which time I find such wagers recorded in the old volume, as:—

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"10 to 100 The Colonel. Grand National.
Geo. Musgrove.

50 to 500 The Drummer. Great Metro-
politan. Gavin Black.

100 to 350 Pretender. 2000 Guineas. G.
Musgrove.

100 to 1000 Knight of the Garter. Chester
Cup. G. Musgrove."

Hech, sirs, but this was picking 'em oot! I fancy there was a slight increase in the Glenlivet traffic in Glasgow; and I find no less than four pages of the volume filled with the name of The Drummer, "to win and 1, 2, 3," for the Derby of that year. Memory recalls how the "green jacket and black belt," worn by Jack Morris on The Drummer, was bang in front, until within one hundred yards of the winning post, when he was passed by Pretender and Pero Gomez, who finished first and second, The Drummer nobly landing my "place" investments.

A further "dash" on Pero Gomez for the Doncaster St Leger came off trumps; but, to judge from the pencillings which remain, my luck for the next few years would appear to have been "dead out." In 1874 it seems that the "versatile and volatile" Mr Charles Head had laid me "six ponies" against George Frederick for the Derby, whilst in the following year, by consistently sticking to "Galopin," more grist was brought to the mill. I can find no record of wagers made in 1876; in

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fact, until four years later, the pernicious habit of speculation seems to have left me temporarily. Possibly there were only too solid reasons for this.

Ill-luck, combined with the riding of Archer, conspired to cause the "eight fifties, Robert the Devil," for the Derby, to remain in the bank of the metallician; but the lost cash came back with interest at Doncaster; most of the winnings being subsequently "left down" on Discount, who won the Portland Plate.

A few years later, the name of Goldseeker occurs frequently in the book; and the Doncaster September Meeting of 1888 was indeed a triumphal march for the book's owner, who, as a matter of fact, won every wager that he made.

"They sha'n't get it back again!" was the mental resolution made, directly afterwards; and my winnings were placed in a "settlement," the cash, unfortunately, not being as tightly screwed down as it might have been. Like the average gambler at Monte Carlo, and elsewhere, I gave gambling a holiday, until the Jumping Meeting at Sandown Park—when bang! went nearly half of that settlement. Alack! alack!

The last few pages are devoted to transactions during 1889; and on one page I note the following, trebly underlined:—

"Bret Harte real jam for Wokingham."

This would appear to have been written on the day before the race. At all events I had

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confided the "tip" to several friends on the previous night; and with the customary gratitude of mankind, not one of them thanked me after Bret Harte had "rolled home" in the hands of a jockey named Peake, who subsequently went to ride in India.

I myself was "put off" the good thing at the last moment; for instead of a "royal dash" on Bret Harte, I find only the following record of speculation on the Wokingham, on the last page of the volume:—

"50 to 300 Veracity. R. Dunn."

And only a few months before booking that wager I had missed "1000 to 80 Bret Harte!"

I may close the old volume. It is questionable if I shall ever look into it again. Sadly, and yet reverently, I may lock the drawer, and leave the records which lie therein to the ravages of time, or the paw of him who cometh after me. "I have told my tale," as Whyte Melville observes at the end of that most delightful of all books, *The Interpreter*. "'Tis but the every-day story of the ups and downs of life—the winnings and losings of the game we all sit down to play."

And we shall continue to play it, despite the efforts of all the Hawkes, Herefords and others.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

THE racing season was on the wane, and people who had yet to get their winter's keep—a class, by the way, of much smaller dimensions than at the present time—were beginning to be somewhat apprehensive about the future. The St Leger had been won by an outsider, the Cesarewitch had fallen a prey to the favourite; but the secret had been so closely kept, and the commission so cleverly executed, that the horse had come to 100 to 30 before any of the sharps, to say nothing of the general public, had got an inkling of the real state of affairs, and the former gentry, it need hardly be said, did not exactly tumble over each other to declare on at such a price. Such was the state of affairs a few days before the race for the Cambridgeshire, which forms the subject of this story.

If the year had been disastrous to those who live by their wits, among whom I do not in this instance wish to include the wielders of the pencil, it had brought more than one good owner within measurable distance of ruin. And it became an open question in the minds of many a little “punter” whether the general body of the ring would “stand” him a week longer. And here let it be said parenthetically,

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that so far from drawing in his horns in respect of a client who is deep in his book late in the year, Mr Penciller is prone to allow him as much rope as he will take, wisely realising that his aforesaid client, if he means paying at all, will have all the winter to make arrangements for doing so, whereas if he is going for the gloves, it matters little whether his debt set down as a bad one is for a monkey or a thousand. I remember, on one occasion, remarking to a bookmaker in Liverpool that he appeared to be having a good gamble with A, with whom several prominent bookmakers had declined to bet.

"I know what I am about," he replied. "That fellow hasn't settled since Doncaster, but likely enough he will come round by Lincoln and pay up in full or offer ten bob in the pound; in either case I shall be better off than if I had dried up two months ago. Laying 'em's good business, especially when the swells like our friend A can't stick out for *outside* prices," and the worthy fellow gave me a look which conveyed far more than any number of italics could express.

But to return to our muttons. Not the least hard hit stable during the season was that presided over by John Allison as trainer and Sir Charles Blight as principal patron. Disaster after disaster had occurred, and but for the young baronet having the reputation of large expectations his credit would long since have been exhausted. As it was, the Mulberries, by

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which name Sir Charles's training establishment was known, had anything but a pleasant odour in the nostrils of the ringmen, who regarded its collapse as only a question of time. There were two horses at the Mulberries, Jonquil and Wild Arab, one of which at least possessed an excellent chance of winning the Cambridgeshire, if the betting quotations might be accepted as any indication of merit. Jonquil, 6 yrs. with 8st. 6lb. had been pitched upon by the public as a likely one directly the weights had appeared, the old black, having won the Chesterfield Cup the year before, got a place in the Hunt Cup at the last Ascot Meeting, and ran forward on many other occasions. Wild Arab, on the other hand, had never done anything since running second in the Guineas, and as a four-year-old with 7st. 10lb. could not be regarded as being particularly well in, but upon the report of a favourable trial with the old one he had taken his place at the head of affairs, and anything over 4 to 1 was eagerly accepted about the four-year-old, while Jonquil, whose price had once been 100 to 8, stood at 100 to 2 offered. There was no mistake about the trial, which had been won easily enough by Wild Arab, in the presence of his owner and trainer; Joe Bragg, the stable jockey, being on the old one, and Flash, the crack middleweight, riding the other. A fast sprinter was borrowed from a friend to set the pace which he did with a vengeance, making it as hot as he could for six furlongs, when Jonquil and Wild Arab headed him, and after the semblance of a

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struggle the young one got home very easily by a couple of lengths.

"Well?" asked the young baronet, as the horses pulled up.

"I think, Sir Charles, that the Cambridge-shire is all over, and barring one thing we have nothing to fear."

"And that is—?"

"The market. The confounded touts are sure to find out the strength of the trial, and unless you make haste all the cream will be skimmed."

"You think it a good thing, then?"

"I never tried a horse so high, and, in order to make quite sure, I gave Wild Arab 3lb. extra to make up for any difference between Flash's riding and Joe Bragg's, though, for that matter, Joe is as good a lad as I know of, if he can't win Derbies and Legers every year."

"Perhaps he doesn't get the chance, John; for my part, I believe he'd do justice to the best horse that ever was plated."

"May be, Sir Charles, may be; anyhow, if you do mean to back the four-year-old, you can't do it too soon, and I shall ask you to let me stand a hundred with you at whatever the commission averages."

"All right, John, that's understood. Good morning," and the baronet cantered off to his lodgings to decide on the extent of his commission.

The commission was duly executed by a couple of trustworthy agents, and the various

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prices having been turned in, Sir Charles found himself in the pleasant position of standing to win some £70,000 over a hot favourite, the odds obtained for him averaging all round about 10 to 1. It was on the Saturday evening before the big race, and the young baronet was sucking a toothpick in the coffee-room at Long's, and re-perusing a telegram that had been handed him as he sat down. It ran to the effect that Wild Arab, with Joe Bragg up, had done an excellent gallop up the Cambridgeshire hill that morning—his last before the race—and had pulled up strong and well. At that moment a waiter entered and informed the baronet that a stranger desired to see him.

"What's his name, George? and what does he want with me?"

"He refused to give his name, Sir Charles, but said he came from Newmarket with a message from your trainer, and he looks quite as much like a lawyer's clerk as a stable-boy."

"Ah! an impudent ruse to serve me, I suppose," said the baronet to himself; then, aloud, "This'll test him. Ask him how many children my trainer has, and if he answers nine, the right number, show him in."

In a few minutes the mysterious visitor appeared on the scene, having solved the Sphinxian riddle, and what was Sir Charles's surprise when he saw Joe Bragg, his jockey, standing before him.

"What's the meaning of this, Bragg? I thought you were at Newmarket helping Allison

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with the horses ; here's his telegram saying that you rode Wild Arab in a gallop this morning !"

"That's so, Sir Charles, but directly after I returned to the stable I made an excuse to get away, and—here I am, sir."

"So I perceive, but can't understand what brought you here. If you want to knock about London I think you might have waited till after the Cambridgeshire."

"It would be too late then, Sir Charles ; and all I want to do is to tell you something while there's yet time. I have a sort of confession to make, sir."

"What jockey has not, I wonder ! Well, out with it."

"To go right to the point, Sir Charles, I pulled your horse."

"Ah, Sugarplum, in the Portland Plate. I always had my suspicions ; and if I had acted on the advice of my friends, you and I would have parted after Doncaster."

"No, Sir Charles, it wasn't that time. I did all I could ; but the mare wasn't good enough."

"Ah, then you mean Tomboy, in the Great Eastern Handicap, when you could only get third. No wonder they were never tired of laying against her."

"No, Sir Charles, I don't mean on that occasion, for I stood £50 myself with you."

"Hang it all ! What do you mean ?"

"Well, Sir Charles, the horse I pulled was old Jonquil."

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"When he ran second in the Hunt Cup, you mean?"

"No, Sir Charles, he had a good go that day."

"Then when the deuce did you pull him?"

"Ten days ago, Sir Charles."

"The man's mad. Why, he hasn't run since the First October Meeting."

"But I did pull him for all that, Sir Charles."

"Come, I can't stand a mad jockey; you had better be off to Colney Hatch with your nonsense."

"I'm only speaking the truth, Sir Charles. I pulled Jonquil in the trial with Wild Arab."

As the words smote on the baronet's ears his dreams of victory, settling his debts—well, some of them—a lot of "ready," and a real good punt at Monte Carlo tables, vanished into thin air, and it was with the utmost difficulty he could articulate, "You d——d scoundrel."

Seeing the invertebrate condition to which he had reduced his employer, the jockey thought he'd better get his story over as soon as possible, especially as there yet remained a gleam of hope.

"Yes, Sir Charles; I pulled him, and let the Arab win, and I'll tell you why. I've been a good servant to you and Mr Allison for years and years, and though I say it myself I can get as much out of a horse as any other lad breathing, and a bit more out of our own animals; but as sure as you have a good thing in the stable instead of letting me have the mount you put up that Flash, or some other fashionable jockey, as they call it, who time and again

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rides the horse to a standstill, and in pops an outsider. So I thought to myself, if an outsider pops in this time it shall be old Jonquil with me in the saddle, and when he took hold of his bit and went up to Wild Arab in the trial, I had all my work to keep him from leaving the young one lengths behind. But after I had done it, and I knew that you had backed the Arab, and, begging your pardon, Sir Charles, when they said it would be all U P with you if the favourite got beat, I said to myself, 'Joe Bragg, you've done wrong, lad; it's the first time in your life you ever pulled a horse, except to orders, and then only once and again, and it's your duty to tell Sir Charles all about it.' And now, sir, if you take and kill me right off I can't say any truer."

"Bragg, you've committed a serious fault, but I'll forgive you on one condition, and that is that you go back at once to Newmarket and not breathe a word to a soul, not even to Allison, about the affair, and maybe you shall ride the winner yet."

Extract from Wednesday's Daily Standard's Special Racing Correspondent:—

"Once more we have a striking illustration of the glorious uncertainty of the Turf, and the folly of depending on private trials. The favourite, who kept his place in the market till the fall of the flag with remarkable firmness, considering that during the last few days it was evident that a commission was out for the

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second string and ultimate winner, Jonquil, was never dangerous. How Wild Arab could only get third to his stable companion, who, in the hands of that painstaking jockey, Joe Bragg, literally cantered in, is now a matter of history. Sir Charles Blight throws in for a big stake, and I congratulate the popular young baronet in having the forethought to back both his animals. In going for the favourite I only," etc., etc.

A FAIR ARTISTE

A STUDY IN BLANC DE PERTE

"SIDDONS CHAMBERS, SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.

"DEAR OLD GRUMPS,—Don't forget to-morrow is my *birthday* party. After the show. If you don't come I will never, *never*—ever so many nevers—forgive you. Lots of good boys and girls coming. Yours, M. T."

Maud Tenterton—of course that isn't her right name—is justly popular in the profession; and as I have known her since she played stage children, she considers herself privileged to call me "Old Grumps." She was brought up to the drama from infancy, and now, when she trips on from the O.P. side to face an audience, invariably gets the biggest round of applause of all the company—or, as she would call it, "crowd"; for Maud, though as good as she is pretty, breaks, on occasion, into the popular slang of the day.

It was not always thus. The popular *soubrette*, the bewitching "burlesque boy" of to-day, can remember very hard times indeed. Her ancestors, male and female, have probably fretted and strutted their hour or two in front of the footlights since the time of the immortal

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William. Her father was at one time a well-known "property man" on the Northern Circuit—he was the probable originator of the phrase "All right at night, sir"—and after his decease, due to the bursting of a property pistol, and subsequent amputation of the injured limb, Maud's mother, who played the lead, was forced to travel, with her two girls, with a "hand-to-mouth" which was touring the United Kingdom with a "fit-up."

Hard times, indeed, they were! Playing, as a rule, three nights in a town, in some lecture hall, which would only hold £15 at the most "elastic" computation, there was but little time for that unfortunate "crowd" to enjoy any recreation. Indeed, what with performances, daily rehearsals of new pieces, and travelling, there was but scant opportunity for sleep or meals. The manager was all right. He was a hard, exacting man, with undoubted business capacities, and, like Mr Rudyard Kipling's ourang-outang, with "too much ego in his kosmos." He screwed his company down with Archimedean power, got as much hard labour out of them as he could, and always had a steak for his own dinner.

Picture to yourself, O gentle reader, the mother with her girls occupying a wretchedly furnished bed-sitting-room in some manufacturing town up north—one sister studying a part, the other taking up ladders in a well-worn pair of fleshings, and the "leading lady" toasting stale bloaters in front of a smoky fire. Maud

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at that time played "everything" — from Ogarita in *The Sea of Ice* to Willie Carlisle in *East Lynne*. And as the joint wages of the three seldom exceeded a pound a week—occasionally in "frosty" weather they did not reach half that sum—they did not exactly live on what is called the "fat of the land." Their dinner, for instance, consisted as often as not of a dried haddock, eked out with potatoes, or a herring or two. Occasionally, *very* occasionally, "it ran to" such a luxury as beef sausages; yeast dumplings, with cheap treacle over them, figured on the *menu* for the supper table, as being filling at the price, and calculated to destroy slumber during the hours which have too often to be devoted to study.

Then it fell upon a night that a prosperous provincial manager, who drove his own gig and wore a gold watch, cast his eyes upon the youthful Maud, the while she was perpetrating her song and dance, between *The Charcoal Burner* and *The Dumb Man of Manchester* in the T.R. Railway Arches, Marlow-in-the-Dyke. He went round afterwards and offered the girl an engagement in his own "show" in a southern county, as he wanted talent for his next "panto."

Maud was only sixteen at the time, and was, naturally, loth to leave her mother and sister. But thirty-five shillings is one pound fifteen, and young ladies in the profession must try and better themselves. So, amid tears and blessings and good wishes for the future, a bargain was

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made; and in another six months my heroine was playing leading burlesque business and, occasionally, important comedy parts (including Lady Teazle and Miss Hardacre) at a stipend of three pounds three shillings per week, "and find her own modern dresses, tights, and boots."

Such talent could not long be allowed to waste its sweetness in the desert air of a provincial city, and ere many months the name of "Miss Maud Tenterton" figured on a London bill. She was soon enabled out of her savings to support her mother and sister in comfort, until the former finished a weary and o'erwrought life in the Brompton Hospital for Consumption, and the other married a reporter in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Soon Maud had saved enough to take a holiday; and whilst in Milan, an eminent professor of music, to whom she went in order to take a few lessons in singing, was so struck with the purity of her voice, that he pronounced it suitable for grand opera, if its fair possessor would only study under himself for a couple of years or so.

"The voice of an angel," observed the professor, in his broken English, "is no gooda, without the whatvecalla cooltivatione."

But Maud was always a worshipper of the "nimble ninepence" rather than of the "slow shilling." "Two years," she reflected, "is a large slice out of a professional's voice. I may be fit for grand opera at the end of that time; but, on the other hand, my voice might not

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improve in the developing. It might crack—I might catch a fever, here, abroad—a hundred unlucky things might happen. I can command £20 a week in London; I should be a fool to give up that."

She was of a practical nature; and thus it happens that to-day she is one of the idols of the public, and at the close of the first act of *The Magic Sunshade*, not long ago, more bouquets—I beg pardon, "floral tributes"—were placed at her dainty feet by the conductor of the orchestra, than Maud herself and the two gigantic stage-footmen could carry off "in nce."

"Married?" do I hear my gentle reader ask? No. Of offers she has had plenty; but, as I have only just observed, my heroine is practical by nature. She is somewhat deficient in sentiment, and lives not altogether for the present.

"Were I to marry an actor," she has more than once observed to myself, "he would always be getting horribly jealous, and end in beating me—and I couldn't stand *that*. And if I let myself be led to the hymeneal altar by a 'Johnny,' he would, after six months of champagne, bracelets, and a yachting tour, get rid of all his money, and expect me to keep him. And I'm not going to do *that*."

Yet let me hasten to add—not the faintest breath of scandal has ever sullied the fair fame of Maud Tenterton. She has won her position through talent and hard work—which mean about the same thing; and not even the para-

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graphist of the gutter "rag" has so far ventured to couple her name with anything but that which is good and pure.

"The admiration of the public is all I want," is another of her favourite aphorisms. "I've bought an annuity in case I should have a long illness and people forget me. I've got cosy chambers in the best part of London, a boudoir where I can study and write—I'm going to write a play some of these days, if any of you young managers will promise to produce it on my own terms—and a great big drawing-room to receive my friends and dressmakers in. I've the cleverest maid in the world, and never indulge in hysterics. And you are all—oh! so kind to me."

And then she will sit down to the piano and trill off a stave of her last new song.

The birthday party mentioned at the beginning of this sketch was a great success. True, we had none of the bankrupt "Johnnies" or *divorcées*, so necessary to the "smart functions" of to-day; but we were a "tony" family all the same. Everybody knew everybody else, and nobody was bored.

"I want no stupid people in my marble halls," my heroine was never tired of repeating. "Everybody who comes inside Tenterton Castle must be good-tempered, amused and amusing. I endure *you*, dear old Grumps," she will usually add as an afterthought, "although you *do* go to sleep before the dancing begins, because I look upon you as a sort of father."

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I used to fancy—but why dig up the past? Besides, I have long since been "another's."

To resume. We had a "high old time" at this birthday party. There were present at the supper-table a representative or two of the nobility, some sister artistes—from "the halls" as well as the temples of the more legitimate drama, for Maud is liberal in her tastes—several men of letters, with the stamp of Fame on those letters—a few rising painters, "and others." The supper was supplied by an eminent Gallic *restaurateur*, who was also accountable for the aged retainer and his four subordinates who fell over each other at intervals behind our chairs.

As for the supper itself I will say but little in this article. There are heaps of people who dote on French cookery, and I willingly confess to having partaken of more than one appetising dish on the table. At the same time I have a weakness for the lordly salmon *in statu naturæ*, with a sheen on his bonnie flanks, instead of smothered with what looks like plaster of Paris, and ornamented with alternate rows and scollopings of tinned peas and artificial holly berries. Then again, if I wish to partake of truffled pheasant cutlets, I prefer them placed separately upon a silver dish, rather than piled into a representation of the Eiffel Tower.

But what signify the eatables after all in pleasant company, with plenty to talk about, everybody speaking at once, and most of them shrieking with laughter? I by no means wish

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it to be inferred that the dry champagne circulated too freely, but in an atmosphere of exhilaration tongues are apt to get unloosened.

There are two of the best *raconteurs* of the day amongst our party, each horribly jealous of the other, so the fun is never allowed to flag. Maud herself is in high spirits and makes quite a little gem of a speech in return for the good wishes on her natal day so neatly expressed on behalf of the guests by the editor of a comic journal; and I am almost moved to tears. My liver, no doubt.

Then we adjourn to the drawing-room, which has been previously cleared of all its chaste and elaborate furniture in order that the mazy dance may be indulged in. At intervals there is a break in the programme for a song; and we applaud all the old favourites, from "Sally in Our Alley" to "Sunshine Above." And then a popular sprig of nobility condescended to knock us in the Old Kent Road, which operation he performed in a most gentlemanly manner. And subsequently one of the men of letters recited "The Village Blacksmith" after Irving and Chevalier, alternately; but did not bring down the house as did "The Pirate King," as sung by a young baronet, whose efforts to put a little ferocity into his task were received with screams of laughter. He was, in reality, like Lambri, as mild a mannered pirate as ever cut throat; still, he took our laughter at his efforts in good part. So we forgave him, because he did his best.

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Yes, the party was a pronounced success ; and the professor and his wife, who shared the flat overhead, declared subsequently that they never had passed so sleepless a morning during the whole course of their lives.

“BOB’S” LEGER

STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A WIDOW

“CAN your horse jump water?” was the first question I heard asked of Colonel Barlow, master-of-the-horse to the Duke of Westminster, in the paddock, some little time before the decision of the Doncaster St Leger of 1880.

“Jump water?” repeated the colonel, in somewhat scornful tones. “He’d climb a ladder with Archer on his back!”

Racing has seldom been carried on amid such dismal and uncomfortable surroundings as on the Town Moor that memorable September 15th. The course was a sea of mud, with occasional brooks therein, wherever there might be a “dip.” The first event on the card was a two miles race, and the two leaders, the four-year-old Exeter and the “aged” Roehampton, “flew” the last water-jump like practised steeplechasers. Shelter of any sort was at a premium, and as the competitors sank into the mud pretty nearly up to their hocks, the reporter who described the winner of the St Leger as showing a “clean” pair of heels to his opponents, protested a little bit too much. There is nothing on earth, it has been said, so prolific as the brain of a race

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reporter—except it be the wife of a farm-labourer.

So persistent was the pluvial visitation that many of the holiday folks remained under cover at the railway station, hoping for brighter and drier times, which came not. And as the average "Tyke" is supposed to ignore and despise all meteorological considerations, in his great love for the national sport, this faint-heartedness surprised me not a little. But the Town Moor was, nevertheless, crowded almost to its extreme holding capacity; and the supply of brown brandy gave out very soon after the decision of the great race.

I had travelled, early that morning, from the peaceful and picturesque little town of Dorking, in Surrey, accompanied by—my aunt. The relict of a rare old sportsman, who in his time had played "the great game" for all it was worth, she was every bit as fond of sport as was the dear departed. She was a plain, matter-of-fact, middle-aged, motherly lady, with a will of her own which occasionally would defy the efforts of all the rest of the world put together. If she had set her heart upon an undertaking, it had to occur. And it was an open secret that an eminent dramatic author had taken my aunt as the model for one of the most amusing and interesting characters in his comedies.

My marching orders were delivered the day before.

"Nat, you've got to take me to Doncaster to-morrow. I've set my heart upon seeing 'Bob'

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win the St Leger; and my commissioner writes that he has got me £50 to £10 about Blanton's horse, so that the trip will cost us nothing."

There is no more precious sight than confidence. Still, I had qualms about the outcome of this personally-conducted journey. It is, as a rule, a nerve-shaking task to escort a woman racing. The ordinary "she" takes nearly as much watching, whilst enjoying herself, as does a powder-mill. In addition to being loaded with wraps, race-glasses, turf-guides, and tipsters' circulars, during the live-long day, the conductor has to secure the sweet creature the best position and the best seat on the course, from which to view the racing; to describe all the incidents of every contest, to answer "who's who?" without check or murmur, and to secure early sittings at the luncheon-table, at a time when he ought to be in the ring, waiting for the "full of the market."

But my aunt was not like the majority of her sex, and was as independent as a pike in a pool. If she had been the only one saved from a wreck, cast upon an island in the Pacific, she would—after first of all kneeling down and giving due thanks for her preservation—have "routed-out" the whole of that island for an arm-chair and an interesting book, and then gone foraging for something to eat—if it were only a limpet or a seagull.

Of course she had seen the race for the last Derby, having driven over the hills with a party from Dorking. Never was there a more

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exciting contest than for that Derby; and years hence the records will be read with avidity which describe the healthy rivalry between the respective partisans of Bend Or and Robert the Devil—or "Ben" and "Bob," as they were called in terms of endearment. How, in making the final bend at Tattenham Corner, the rider of "Ben" was so hemmed in on the rails that he had to carry his left foot on a level with the top of his horse's neck; how Frederick Archer, that rider, as he told the present writer, would gladly, at that point of the race, have taken "a dollar" for his chance of victory, and how that prince of jockeys stole a march upon Rossiter, "Bob's" rider, at the finish, and won the race by the shortest of heads—all these things have been, and will continue to be, chronicled full many a time and oft. My aunt had held the chance of "Bob" in the highest estimation, and although the Duke of Westminster's horse was much the better favourite, had backed her opinion with a good bold cheque. But she kept a stiff upper lip after the result had been announced, expressing at the same time the bold conviction that she would "get it all back at Doncaster."

What had the two great equine rivals been doing in the interim between Derby and St Leger? Only ten days after so narrowly missing the Blue Riband, Robert the Devil had crossed the channel and carried off the Grand Prix de Paris—value £6076; exactly £299 less than the Derby—from Le Destrier and eight other French

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horses. And it was after the horse had been led in as victor, that Charles Blanton, his trainer, aired his knowledge of the French language so successfully.

"Prenny gardy, mossoos," cried the trainer to the crowd who were pressing round his champion. "Prenny gardy, can't you? '*Bob*' *kicks!*"

Robert the Devil subsequently walked over for a race at Stockbridge in the following month; whilst "Ben" had only finished the shortest of heads in front of Fernandez, an own brother to Isonomy, for the St James's Palace Stakes at Ascot. But a still more important victory had fallen to the Duke of Westminster's crack ere he once more met '*Bob*,' in the following September. A discharged stud-groom had caused it to be put about, during the month of July, that Bend Or was not Bend Or at all; that he had been "changed" as a foal; that instead of being the colt by Doncaster out of Rouge Rose, he was the colt by the same sire out of Clemence, named Tadcaster. Here was a how-d'ye-do! The joint-owners of Robert the Devil, Messrs Charles Brewer, George Kiallmark and Charles Blanton, at once lodged an objection to the winner of the Derby, on the grounds of "wrong description." The stewards of the Jockey Club—who are *ex-officio* stewards of the Epsom Meeting—met at Mr James Lowther's town house in Grosvenor Street, with closed doors; the details of the deliberation being subsequently given to the representatives of the

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Press—of whom the present writer was one—by Mr Lowther himself. In the result, the objection to Bend Or was overruled; although some people believe to this day that the decision was wrong, and that Bend Or was in reality Tadcaster. But what's in a name? The Derby winner subsequently sired Ormonde, who, if not *the* horse of the century, was most certainly a "giant in the land" half a dozen years after his sire had so luckily beaten "Bob" at Epsom. But I shall never forget the face of the "discharged stud-groom" after the result of the objection had been announced; nor the positive statement made to myself by the same authority.

But I am keeping my aunt waiting an unconscionable time. On our way from King's Cross the rain clouds began to collect together. We had left Dorking in glorious summer weather; but by the time that Doncaster was reached the floodgates of heaven had become unloosed, and the rain it rained with quite tropical freedom.

On the spur of the moment I suggested—entirely on my respected relative's account—a return to London, home and beauty, by the next up-train. She snorted.

"Nonsense, Nat! You have your work to do, and you must not shirk *that*. Never let an employer know he can get on without your services. You should always remember that employment of any kind is not so easy to obtain."

I remarked, apologetically, that I had only suggested an orderly retreat in her own in-

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terests; and that with the aid of an evening paper, and *Silk and Scarlet* by "The Druid," I could do my work just as well in London as at Doncaster. I had been told off to write a "flowery" column and a half descriptive of Doncaster, past and present, the leading incidents of the day, the smart toilettes of the north-country belles, the passion of the "Tykes" for the "sport of kings," and all the fun of the fair. But my aunt was adamant.

"I am afraid, Nathaniel, that you lack energy and resolution. Are you sugar or salt, that you should fear a drop of rain? Ah! your poor uncle was the only member of the family with any go in him."

My deceased uncle was not half a bad sort, but had he possessed a little less "go" might have lived a little while longer, and have left a little more of the needful to his widow—not to mention his dutiful, his legacy - dutiful, nephew.

My aunt would not hear of being taken to a hotel for luncheon.

"Find me a good place in the Grand Stand, my dear Nat," she said, "and then go and gather 'copy' in the weighing-room and paddock. A pork pie, or a sandwich, with a bottle of stout, will be quite enough luncheon for me; and you can look me up, if you can get away, just after the great race."

So, beneath the drippings from umbrellas, in a steamy atmosphere of alcohol and more or less vile tobacco, did I proceed to collect facts.

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"Now, then, for the duck pond!" playfully remarked Thomas Cannon, emerging into the open, heavily mackintoshed, his saddle and appurtenances having been taken charge of by the trainer of Robert the Devil. Archer, who had been pretty well drenched to the skin in riding the winner of the preceding match, trudged manfully through the slush, in order to get the "leg up" on Bend Or. The preliminaries were hurried through, and in a few minutes more Mr Tom M'George had lowered his red flag, and the dozen runners were off.

The three minutes and thirty-two seconds—pretty good time considering the awfully heavy going—occupied in running the great race, seemed like a lifetime, and but little could be seen of the features of the first part of the race. At the Red House the two favourites appeared to be going well, but Bend Or's chance was disposed of soon afterwards. It was alleged afterwards that the Duke's horse had been "struck into" in rounding the Intake Turn; whilst, according to another report, some miscreant had "landed" the Derby winner with a ginger-beer bottle. Anyhow, some distance from the winning-post "Bob" had got all his opponents settled, and, with his rider leaving nothing to chance, the horse soaked in by himself, three lengths in front of Cipolata (whose jockey's jacket had been reduced to "any colour you like" by the rain) and The Abbot, who finished respectively, close together, second and third. The shattered idol, Bend Or, was

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sixth, and Jenny Howlet, the Oaks winner, last, pulling up, whilst Napsbury walked in with the crowd, smothered, together with his jockey, Harry Morgan, in mud from head to foot.

A heartfelt and prolonged burst of cheering, after the winner's jockey had passed the scale, a bumper to toast the gallant "Bob" and his joint-owners, a few hasty words pencilled down on a telegraph form put on the wires, and then to find my aunt, to congratulate her upon the result of her unshaken faith in the best three-year-old of 1880, and to get away *en route* for London as soon as we could.

I found my esteemed relative on the first floor of the Grand Stand, surrounded by a noisy and enthusiastic crowd. She held by the coat-collar a slim young man with a satchel suspended from his shoulders, a shiny white mackintosh, trousers of a large check pattern, and a hat that had once been white, but which had been washed a dirty drab, on his head.

"I want my money," cried my aunt. "Fourteen pounds to two you laid me against the winner."

"Pay the old gal!" shouted a burly Yorkshireman. "Else we'll limb tha!"

"I tell ye it was five pounds to a couple Bendy Or as you 'ad off o' me," roared the metalician, who gesticulated violently, and was evidently anxious to be off. His clerk, who carried the field book, backed up his employer's statement, and offered to show the transaction

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in plain letters and figures to "Any gem'man as could read."

I grasped the volume, and soon saw a rough erasure or two beneath the name of the winner.

"You lying thieves!" I exclaimed, after taking my aunt out of the hurly-burly. "Fish out sixteen of the best like lightning, or to gaol you'll go, if I have to take you both there myself."

"Bit thick to ring the book on the old gal," observed a habitual backer.

"Come, parse along there!" commanded a stalwart policeman, appearing upon the scene. And after much protest and expostulation, and a great deal of most unpoetical language, the metalician was induced to part with his just liabilities; the crowd adjourned, to go and find out "what ran" for the next race, and my aunt expressed herself quite ready for the cup of strong tea which I had managed to procure for her.

She wouldn't hear of leaving just yet. She would, and did, stay the programme out. There were but two more races, the final couple of events being walks over. And as she succeeded in getting "even money Sunburn" for the Milton Stakes, my plucky relative was well satisfied with the result of her speculations for the day.

But she resolutely declined to return to London by the 5.30 train. To dine comfortably in Doncaster, and wait until the "crush"

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had gone, was clearly the wise and proper thing to do.

"And you must take me to some hotel where the best bookmakers stay," she directed me. "We might meet some of them at dinner, and I can back 'Bob' for the Cesarewitch at the best odds."

My aunt had but little respect for the *convenances* of society, or for the law of the land, which sought to check wagering on licensed premises, either. She made a hurried toilet in the landlady's room, and at six o'clock we were sitting down to the "race ordinary" at the Blue Lion. Several "leviathan" metallicians were present, and my relative succeeded in capturing an offer of "ten ponies," from burly Ben Hyams, about Robert the Devil for the forthcoming Cesarewitch, which, as most of the world knows, he won in a canter. And less than an hour afterwards the bold horse tried hard to eat one of his joint-owners, who had ventured into the box.

"'Bob' must have been very, *very* hungry," said George Masterman—who was a bit of a wag—when he heard it, "to try to make a meal off George Kiallmark!"

We sat on, and on, after dinner, my aunt seeming to enjoy the conversation, which was couched in rough, homely phraseology, but was specially kept free from offence, on account of the presence of ladies. Even bookmakers can pick their language when they like.

"No, no, mum," said old Ben, "I don't want

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ye to post the money, now. Your name, and your nephew's, is quite good enough for my little volume."

And just then, my aunt, in turning, happened to catch a glimpse of the clock, and exclaimed,—

"Mercy on us! We've missed the last train!"

It was too true. Whatever was to be done? Every bed in Doncaster was known to have been let—in some instances to two, and even three, people. Not even the bagatelle-table at the Blue Lion was disengaged for sleeping purposes.

"And wherever you are to go I do *not* know, ma'am," said the good landlady. "All our own beds is let, and me and my 'usband, and the staff, has to sit up in the kitchen all night long, and go to bed while the customers are at the races."

"There's a train up at four in the morning," suggested one of the diners.

"And what is to happen till then, sir?" snapped my aunt, indignantly. "Am I to walk the streets of Doncaster until that train starts?"

When in doubt, go and find out for yourself; and as a last resort try a policeman. Leaving my aunt at the Blue Lion, I sallied forth, making my final inquiries at the police station.

"You are the two hundred and thirtieth who has come to me with that same question," said the inspector, who was civility itself.

Eventually, just before closing time, it was

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arranged that my distinguished relative should share the bed of the good lady who looked after the Grand Stand, and slept in a small room just under the roof. As for myself, failing temporary accommodation in the saddle-room of the Salutation, I could have "a sort of a bed" made up for me on the floor of the wine bar in the Grand Stand. I chose the latter alternative. Never should it be said that I had deserted my dear aunt!

Clean linen, brushes and combs, and other aids to the toilet, were obtainable, and obtained, next morning. We resolved to see another day's racing, and to catch the 5.30 "up" without making any mistake this time. And we both had a good win over Discount, for the Portland Plate.

"I have done some quaint things in my lifetime," remarked my aunt, as we settled into our seats in the train that evening; "but never—no! never have I slept in a race-stand before!"

A BAD EGG

EXCITING EXPERIENCES OF THE ARMY

THE historical curate, after partaking of hen-fruit, suited only to electioneering purposes, is said to have remarked, in apologising for the egg, that "parts of it were excellent." But Christopher, otherwise "Kit," Rogers, better known to his brother-officers as "The Blighter," was bad all through. He was what the Yanks call "real tough"; and how in the world he was ever allowed to become one of Queen Victoria's worst bargains in the army, or what sort of school had kept him long enough for him to learn things, we could never make out.

Whilst at the dépôt he fairly painted Chatham red; ran up a bill with every tradesman who would allow him "tick," and without the smallest intention of ever "footing" said account; flirted outrageously with every woman, virtuous and otherwise, with whom he came into contact, received more "orderly-room wiggings" than all the rest of the subalterns in the garrison put together; and when the time arrived for him to join headquarters, and the "route" for India came, and was published in order that all

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who ran shops might read, it was nothing short of marvellous that "The Blighter" managed to give his creditors the slip. This was in the days when citizens and warriors were imprisoned for debt, and not for "contempt." Enough "*ne exeats*" were served upon him to stuff a sofa with. But he sailed for the East Indies, nevertheless; and as his father was a particularly shrewd, and a not particularly conscientious, attorney-at-law, the fact of the son being able to evade his liabilities, *pro tem.*, was probably due to the efforts and special pleading of his progenitor.

There was no overland route for the "joining" subaltern in those days; and for upwards of five months Ensign Rogers of the "Thrusters" passed an adventurous and tolerably exciting time aboard the *Hooghli*, one of Blew's sailing vessels, which also carried—in addition to the usual cargo of rats and cockroaches—several other army officers, and a goodly contingent of ladies, including the third daughter of the general commanding the Cherut Division out yonder. The breath of scandal was by no means absent from the good ship, to fill whose sails, however, in times of calm, such breath is of no practical use. "The Blighter," whether through his own fault or misfortune, frequently came under the censure of the "skipper," and once narrowly escaped being confined below in irons, Thrice was he put in arrest by the senior soldier officer; and nobody would play cards with him after the first evening. So there was universal

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joy when he stepped into the *dinghy*, for shore, after the *Hooghli* had hove to in Garden Reach.

But, confound him ! we of the gallant Thrusters had to endure his presence for far too long, after he joined us at Bakripore, just beyond the sacred city of Benares. His reputation had preceded him ; and our grizzled commanding officer openly announced at mess that he would sooner have been inflicted with cholera.

"The Blighter" arrived with little or no baggage, besides some well-worn articles of uniform, a sword and a mattress. He stayed at first at the Government rest-house, or *dāk bungalow* : for, although it is advisable, and in accordance with the manners and customs of the service, for the young officer to find a house-mate, to "double up" with one or more of his brother-officers, the last-joined had considerable difficulty in finding anybody willing to take him in. It was, in fact, "The Blighter" who usually did the taking in.

At length he obtained, by deliberate fraud, temporary rest for the soles of his feet, and—other parts of his anatomy. Two jovial captains, of long service and jovial disposition, habitual practical jokers, occupied a roomy bungalow no great way from the mess-house. One morning after parade the last-joined managed to engage the attention of Barker, one of the jovial captains.

"I say, Barker," he observed, "I should so much like to come and double up at your place ; and if you've no objection, Phillips"—the other

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occupier—"has none. In fact, he told me to tell you so."

"The devil, he did!" thought Barker, who said aloud,—

"Well, I've no objection, if Phillips hasn't. Come when you like; but mind—you'll have to behave, young feller."

An hour or two later, Kit Rogers pitched a similar tale to Phillips, who had "no objection if Barker hasn't." So "The Blighter's" scanty kit was transferred to his new abode, whither he himself betook him, soon afterwards.

But you couldn't have weighed or measured the wrath of the Phillips-Barker confederacy when, a day or two later, they came to compare notes.

"What infernal cheek!" cried Barker, almost foaming at the mouth.

"Damned young villain!" growled Phillips, loading his shot-gun.

A policy of ejectment was forthwith decided upon; and the intruder retired to rest that night in blissful ignorance of the fact that five rupees' worth of fireworks had been piled beneath his bedstead, with a connecting train of gun-powder carried beneath the door leading to the common sitting-room. As soon as the victim appeared to be asleep—the conspirators, who had left the mess-house early, were watching his movements through the glass of that door—the train was set alight, and the circus commenced.

His mosquito-curtains were the first to feed the flame. Then bang! crack! whiz-z-z! fizzi,

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whizzy, whack!" "The Blighter" started up in bed; surely the Old Man had got him before his time! At the same moment the contents of a fowling-piece--principally powder and wadding--were fired through the glass of the door, followed by bursts of demonical laughter.

Out of bed jumped the victim. Out of the door he fizzled, like a healthy young cornet, nor did he stop running, albeit clad in nothing but a pair of Chinaman's pants, until the sanctuary of the *dák bungalow* was reached. There was no mistaking the hint that his room was preferred to his company at the *château* Barker-Phillips. And he darkened the doorway of that mansion no more.

He was always in trouble of some sort and being haled before the C.O., who would, I was certain, have gladly parted with half his pay and allowance to be quit of this scourge of a sub-altern. Once the desired consummation nearly came off; for "The Blighter" fell, pony and all, into a dry well, sixty feet deep, on his way home from mess. The pony was smashed into cat's meat, but his rider got off with a few scratches; and private No. 25673, William Fisher, attended at the orderly-room subsequently, with the view of being rewarded for saving life. But the colonel didn't quite see it in that light.

"Reward be damned!" he snarled. "I've a good mind to give the man eight days' cells for not letting well alone!"

But until admonished, and informed that to

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dine at mess was just as much a parade as the commanding officer's little matutinal scamper, the Bad Egg would frequently absent himself from the family banquet; and rumour had it that he preferred the society of a warrant officer's good lady, of Eurasian descent, who lived, and leered, and loved, close to the native bazaar.

Some of his old bills and "kites" began to sail in, not to mention summonses to appear before the "court of requests," and even executions; and one torrid morning, when we had mustered on parade to see a fellow-creature receive "fifty with the claws" for being drunk on duty, "The Blighter" was missing.

"Go to Mr Rogers's quarters immediately after parade," said the colonel to the adjutant, "and place him under close arrest."

But the bird had flown. The delinquent, scared at the prospect of captivity and disgrace, and having drawn his last month's pay on the previous morning, had bolted, in the *mufti* in which he stood. Calcutta was his "point"; and he eventually reached the City of Palaces, after a series of hairbreadth escapes, from bailiffs and process-servers of all denominations, white and coloured. He once hid in the chimney of a *dák bungalow*: and upon another occasion was immersed up to his chin in a tributary of the Hooghli which contained alligators and water-snakes, the while the blood-hounds were close by.

But when his supply of cash became exhausted, the delights of Calcutta and Raneemoodi Gulli

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began to pall upon "The Blighter." So he hid no more from the minions of the law; and when a merciless tipstaff, in the exercise of his profession, made the pounce, his captive at once suggested his own removal to Fort-William, to be handed over to the military authorities.

"You can't take me to prison," he informed the officer of the court of small causes, "because I am a deserter from the 'Royal Thrusters.'"

So back came "The Blighter," under proper escort, to headquarters. It looked a certainty that a general Court-Martial would be convened, and that the prisoner would be promptly "broke." But our "chief," although occasionally rough of tongue, possessed bowels of compassion. The prisoner was told to send in his papers at once; and that it was only the clemency of the C.O., backed by a general recommendation to mercy on the part of his brother-officers, which prevented the case being referred for the merciful (or otherwise) consideration of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief.

So with what money he could scrape together—the price of his commission had already been mortgaged up to the hilt, and a bit over—"The Blighter" started upon another adventurous journey to Calcutta, and he had told us beforehand that if he did not succeed in obtaining nice, genteel employment, such as clerk in a bank, trainer of race-horses, or "bonnet" to a house of ill-fame, he should most certainly ship before the mast. And the consensus of opinion at head-

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quarters was that he would ship before the mast. And we were all sorry for that mast.

The exile, from details subsequently furnished, appeared to have had a fairly good time in the capital of Bengal, where he made some nice, new friends, whom he made useful, in one way or another. As some slight return, he gave a banquet at Wilson's Hotel, most of the luxuries of the season, native or hermetically-sealed, of European origin, were spread on the board. The health of the host was proposed in a neat speech, and acknowledged fervently, if humorously.

And just afterwards he was called away. And it was only on the appearance of certain bailiffs that the guests and the manager of the hotel were made aware that the pecuniary position of the giver of the feast was not altogether satisfactory. Nor did any of the anxious little crowd ever see him again. At the nearest *ghât* "The Blighter" had chartered a *dinghy*, in the which he had sped down to Garden Reach. Thence, having provided for his retreat beforehand, he embarked aboard a P. & O. steamer, on which he worked his way back to England as an under-steward.

Our friend was next heard of at Leamington, where he was cutting a fine dash. His alleged credentials as an officer who had just sold out of a hussar regiment, were not questioned; and he made many friends in the hunting-field—"The Blighter" was a workman in the saddle—and at the club. But he won too frequently and too largely at the card-table; and by-and-by

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the charming Midland spa became too hot to hold his excellency, and he vanished from the scene.

Finding his way, once more, to red-hot Chatham, our hero enlisted in the Royal Engineers. But although the uniform is tasty enough, and the wages on a comparatively liberal scale, there was far too much manual labour in the excavating of trenches, and the manufacture of fascines and gabions, in the daily travail of the sapper, to be agreeable to one possessed of a free soul and a nice taste in "loafing." His superior education got him promoted to lance-corporal in a very brief space; but his weakness for the excellent old ale and the seductive Old Tom, obtainable in the parish, very rapidly procured him reduction to the ranks. A week or two afterwards he deserted the corps; but, Chatham being no easy place for a deserter to get free of, he was captured; received several flesh wounds in resisting the escort, and served a space in a military prison.

After release, he fell across an old brother-officer—who had exchanged into another regiment—at Chatham; negotiated a small loan, requisitioned a well-made suit of plain clothes by a West-End tailor, and—once more cut the painter which bound him to military service. This time he got off scot-free; and nobody heard any ken of "The Blighter" for some time afterwards.

The years rolled on—as they have a way of

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behaving—and I had landed *per* steamer, after a terrible experience with a cyclone, at Madras, on my way from Burmah to home, sweet home. It was necessary for me to wait nearly three weeks for the steamer from Calcutta; and, on the whole, I had pleasant experiences of Madras. But whom should I meet one evening, riding at a sharp canter along the local "Row" with, at his side, a fair-haired lady, alleged to be the *chère ami* of an exalted personage who had command of the military forces, but—"The Blighter!"

He looked a fine figure of a man, on a valuable "Waler," and altogether in far better circumstances than I had ever seen him. And I was not a little astonished at the appearance he presented.

"Where are you staying, old man?" he shouted, turning in the saddle.

"At the club," I replied; regretting immediately afterwards that I had not had sufficient presence of mind to give a fictitious address. It was no particular credit to be seen in company with a will-o'-the-wisp utterly devoid of principle, and who had "done things."

Next afternoon a card was brought me by my dusky *valet-de-chambre*, endorsed—

"MAJOR HAMILTON ASHCROFT

Late 191st Hussars"

And in walked "The Blighter."

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With all the coolness in the world he inquired after the welfare of "the dear old regiment"; and he was sorry to see me so much pulled down by fever. He had "struck oil" at last—or, rather, found gold in mammoth quantities, in Australia, but, having had enough of digging, he had put some of his pile into the horse trade, and had only recently landed in Madras with a consignment of half a hundred "Walers" of the purest blood. He had, only two days before, sold one to "the general" for 2500 rupees.

Of course I believed as much of this as I wanted to. My servant was ordered to compound two "pegs"—at that time composed of soda-water fortified with cognac. Soon afterwards my visitor, producing a handsome gold watch, pleaded an important engagement, and took his leave. And it was not until three years later that I saw his face again.

I was staying in Portsmouth, and had accepted an invitation to luncheon with a regiment then quartered at the Cambridge Barracks in the High Street. Just before we sat down my attention was attracted by several squads of recruits being drilled in the barrack square beneath, and commanded by the dining-room windows. At about that time, in consequence of anticipated trouble with a certain foreign country, the British Government was hotly searching the highways, byways and slums, for fresh food for powder; the height and chest measurements being considerably relaxed.

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One of my good hosts, seeing my attention fixed upon the "left, right, fingers touching the seams of the trousers" business, remarked casually,—

"By the way, there's a fellow drilling out there who you ought to know something about. He pitched us a tale about having been an officer in your regiment; and unless he's the biggest liar on earth, he must have knocked about a bit."

I had spotted my old brother-officer already. There, the right-hand man of one of the squads, marched "The Blighter," who, with his 6ft. 2ins. of well-set-up frame, quite dwarfed his fellow "recruits."

"Like to see him afterwards?" asked my host.

I was not particularly anxious to, and contented myself with asking the probable destination of No. 76012 Private Christopher Rogers.

"Oh! he'll go out to India with us next month, I suppose," was the answer. "He seems to be a good driller, and if he only behaves himself he ought to get his stripes in no time."

Next morning I met Private Rogers on South-sea Common. And before we parted I had bestowed upon him the two sovereigns which I had intended to put on a horse at Goodwood.

A few hours later "The Blighter" was missing from barracks."

And once again I saw him. My London address having been discovered, goodness knows

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how, I was sent for, only the year afterwards, by a patient in Charing Cross Hospital. He had received frightful injuries from an empty champagne bottle, wielded by the "chucker-out" of a social supper club.

The patient was Christopher Rogers, who could not possibly, so the house surgeon said, last out the night. He had fallen into a delirious state since sending for me, and his condition was quite pitiable. And that was the last I saw of "The Blighter" in the flesh.

As I saw the earth heaped upon his coffin, I murmured a sincere prayer that the dear departed might know that "infinite rest" which he had never been acquainted with in life.

“RAGS” AND “BONES”

A TALE OF A DOG SHOW

I AM devoted to dogs, but do not exhibit much nowadays. The enterprise is too exciting for my wretched nerves. Besides, stern necessity compels me to earn mine own increment, and although there are large fortunes to be made out of a close and active pursuit of the “Fancy,” the prizes go into but few hands. There are plenty of blanks, and blanks will not pay for the education of youth or the children’s boots; whilst no up-to-date butcher will accept blanks as cash.

Time was, however, when the “Rockingham” Kennels were dreaded, if not respected, by some of the doggy division, and when the deal dresser—called by courtesy a sideboard—in our front parlour groaned beneath the weight of successive challenge cups. I never soared as high as Mount St Bernards, Great Danes, or Irish Wolfhounds. The weird-looking Borzoi—who always appears as if he had stepped straight out of a picture of the Middle Ages—had not invaded our island home, and the Terrier Fancy, whether bull, fox, or toy, was not to my own fancy. I cottoned to performing dogs—animals

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who could do things. A tyke who could leap through paper hoops, climb a fire-escape and rescue a rag baby—with a raw beefsteak in its bosom—or pick out a certain "nap" hand from a pack of cards, was the tyke for me. So I went in for poodles.

I bought "Rags" as a puppy, just outside the Fire Office in Regent Street. The price asked, and paid, was very moderate, and I be-thought me that the original owner, and breeder, of the pup had, probably, just stepped out, or was having his tea at the back, when the vendor acquired the little animal. Three years later he had become entitled to the prefix of "Champion," usually abbreviated in dog show catalogues into "Ch.," and every "tyker" in the metropolis tried to get him. But "Rags" was "wide"; knew all about the "pudding" lure, and never quitted the locality of my heels whilst out of doors.

But I had a rival in the Poodle Fancy—Barker, who lived in the next crescent to us, who puffed himself out with envy, hatred, and malice, and who possessed "Bones." How he acquired the animal I forget; but it was probably by stealth. Anyhow, Barker, when I was not on hand, was wont to question the legitimacy of the descent of "Rags," whilst boasting with much force of language that "Bones" was possessed of an absolutely pure pedigree.

"Bones" was by no means a bad-looking poodle, but was always behind "Rags" on points. Whenever the two met, mine had a

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little bit the advantage. The judge, as a rule, would say he had some slight difficulty in coming to a decision, but that "Rags" had more of the poodle type and more symmetry of nostril than "Bones." Whereupon Barker would mutter that next time he would have a blooming judge of his own, and retire to seek consolation at the alcohol counter.

Massingham Show was one of the most important canine exhibitions of the year. Most of the London Fancy and his wife started on the Sunday evening for Massingham, and when I arrived at the departure station, the down platform was seriously congested with dog boxes, baskets, crates, and other kinds of conveyances for canines. One of the first of the Fancy I met at the terminus was Barker, and in order not to show any ill-feeling I consented to join him in wishing each other mutual "luck," at the refreshment bar.

There was that in Barker's eyes, however, which expressed a fervent desire that I might drop in my tracks without delay from apoplexy. And had a detective made a sudden appearance and "buckled" Barker for burglary, I would have improvised a pæan for the occasion and sung it. There we parted. Nothing on earth would have induced me to have Barker as a travelling companion for three hours and a half; so I took the corner seat in a smoker, with my back to the engine; gave a porter a shilling to be sure and see "Rags," in his travelling basket, into the van; wrapped my travelling rug about

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my person, lit a pipe, and in a few minutes the heavy train had got a move on it.

We were rather late in arriving at Massingham. In the full consciousness that we had missed the toothsome dinner *menu* at The Three-headed Lamb, and would have to put up with "scraps" for supper, my soul was somewhat disturbed; and it was bitterly cold. But all considerations of food and comfort vanished when, on the officials thoroughly emptying the train, the fact became apparent that "Rags" and his travelling basket were missing!

To telegraph up the line to every stopping station and to the terminus itself was the work of a very few minutes. By-and-by came the following from London:—

"Regret basket left on platform. Porter in infirmary with sprained back. Will forward *per* newspaper train, morning.—SUPERINTENDENT."

The message, if somewhat obscure, comforted me a little bit. Still, I was not altogether at my ease about "Rags." I had set my heart upon his winning the "Corporation Cup"—to be won outright. What if he should not arrive in time to be judged? "Bones" would get it. And another and a more terrible thought flashed across my brain. I had not seen Barker get out of the train at Massingham. What if he never started by it from the metropolis? What if he had kidnapped "Rags"? "Bones," in his

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basket, I had especially noticed, as they were unloading the van, and my rival's dog had been despatched forthwith to the Show hall.

I slept but poorly that night at The Three-headed Lamb. And putting all considerations of breakfast on one side I was stumping the platform at 7.30 next morning, awaiting the arrival of the newspaper train, which eventually rolled in only twenty minutes late.

"This your basket, sir?" "Yes—out with it, quick, please." Poor "Rags"! Stiff cold and ravenous the poor dog would be! I had some choice morsels for him, wrapped in a newspaper, within my pocket.

I threw up the lid of the basket, and—mercy on us! What was this? In place of "Rags" up popped, with a squawk, a hideous infant in swaddling clothes, face black as the ace of spades, crisply-curled hair, yellow eyes, and round its neck a label inscribed:—

"KISS YOUR LATEST!"

Confusion! Whose work was this? Probably my rival's. 1000 to 15 on Barker! I would lay for him, take him by the throat, and twist it round with all my might. In the meantime I must dissemble. Bestowing the sable infant—which on very casual inspection proved to be a mechanical doll, which cried when the spring was released—upon a railway porter, who said it would amuse his young family, I returned to the hotel to breakfast and to cudgel

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my brains as to what steps to take about the missing poodle, "Champion Rags." Curse Barker!

I went to the Show soon afterwards. Mechanically I walked up and down in front of the poodle benches. "Bones" was there, looking fit and well. He would undoubtedly capture the "Corporation Cup" in my dog's absence; but where was his villainous master?

The time was getting on. The judge could not keep the exhibitors waiting much longer. And in a minute or two there was a joyful chorus of "Here he is!"

"Quite ready, ladies and gentlemen," said the judge.

And then came a bolt from the blue—metaphorically, of course. My heart stopped beating, and the sparse "thatch" beneath my hat stood erect on my skull. Ere the first poodle had been lifted from his bench there was a hustling, rustling sound from the near distance, a tinkle of sweet silver poodle ankle bells, a chorus of "Shoo-h-h! Stop him. Turn him out!"

Angels and ministers of grace defend us! With a joyful "boo-whooh!" on bounded "Champion Rags," who, without more ado and amid a scene of the utmost enthusiasm, proceeded to bench himself. Oh, wonderful!

He looked rakish and tucked up, but he was full of life and larks. An hour or so later he had won everything he could, including seventeen "specials" (which included a pair of Sheffield plated snuffers and a sack of dog biscuits) and

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had eaten a well-earned dinner, and the judge said there was no poodle in the world who could put back "Champion Rags."

He had run all the way from the metropolis. There could be no doubt about it, bless him! Barker—whom I did not meet until some time afterwards—had evidently "rung the changes" on the departure platform, had taken the dog home and locked him up. The intelligent animal had promptly jumped out of window, and with marvellous instinct tracked his master all the way to Massingham. Possibly some of my readers may recollect reading the incident in the doggy papers of the period? Or—well—p'r'aps not.

No, I didn't assault Barker or sue him. It was difficult to get evidence to prove his criminality; and only fools go to law, unless obliged. Besides, poor Barker shortly afterwards had losses, and eventually got a job as minder of 'bus horses in a yard not far from the Elephant and Castle. But on the spur of the moment, the first time I met him after the incident I addressed him thus,—

"You'll never take salt as a tyker, my lad. Better confine your energies and talents for the future to pinching cavies and tame rabbits!"

ACTORS' MAKESHIFTS

EXPERIENCES OF AN OLD-TIME MUMMER

THE lot of the strolling player, if not altogether a happy one, possesses numerous delights for the natural Bohemian, the vagabond, who, if neither homeless, ragged, nor tanned, can appreciate the advantages of perpetually "moving on."

What with merry, and occasionally witty, companions, fresh faces, pastures new, and a constant succession of dressing-rooms and landladies, the life is full of infinite variety; and with no rates or taxes to pay, no quarter-day to be faced, and enough to eat and drink, the member of the travelling company, although described in still unappealed Acts of Parliament as "rogue and vagabond," is usually to be envied. And not the least exciting part of his profession is the delightful uncertainty which frequently exists as to the punctual issue of the reward of merit, the doubt as to whether or no the "ghost" will take his "martial stalk" or not at the appointed time.

Over and over again has the present writer become "stranded" through the failure of the manager to appreciate the "pleasures of part-

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ing"; and one memorable occasion is uppermost in the mind's eye, when a "dry up" in the "Lakes" district was the means of compelling myself and another—the company had separated, after the disappearance of the chief and his little satchel—to "tramp it" all the way to Blackpool; where we "blacked up," and did musical and terpsichorean "turns" on the sands.

Let actors and actresses who have achieved success, and a due proportion of hardly-earned increment, prate about their "Art"; in the days when I went gipsying the great "Art" of all was to ensure the punctual apparition of the "spectre."

Reverting to the sands, Bob Lovejoy, our second love-comedy merchant, twanged the banjo, if not exactly like an angel, in a determined and vigorous manner; whilst I managed, from time to time, to extract some sort of harmony from a cocoa-wood flute. I fear ours must have been a somewhat ghastly performance; and we supported life, for the most part, on the plumless buns of the county and nettle beer, with an occasional slab of fried plaice by way of a treat. We slept on a mattress, on the floor of a garret, in a cottage, one of whose windows proclaimed in capital letters that lodgings were to let to "respectable" men; and the good landlady had, at first, some qualms as to our respectability. But we were doing our little utmost to obtain the bare necessities of life, and had just enough left over at the end of a fortnight to pay for two third-class tickets to

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London, where we were not long in obtaining other modest engagements.

I was once with a small crowd who played *La Fille de Madame Angot* for all it was worth, in "fit-ups," and at one town, in Dumfriesshire, our stage consisted of four kitchen tables, not even fastened together. So the performance might be said to have proceeded "trippingly." And at the end of Act I., owing to lack of space, Larivandière and his *corps d'armée*—represented by the porter at the railway station, off duty for half an hour, and a greengrocer's apprentice—suddenly disappeared from view, just in front of the back cloth.

At Keswick, owing to the scanty dressing-room accommodation, two of our crowd had to dress whilst seated on the rungs of a painter's ladder, and anybody who wanted a wash had to visit the pump in the backyard. But this was nothing to the fix we once found ourselves in at Marlow-in-the-Dyke, when the play announced was the entrancing tragedy of *Othello*, and the costumes had not arrived from Liverpool within half an hour of the time announced for the ascent of the curtain. The costumier had been so faint of heart as not to let his dresses go without the hire cash being planked down in advance; and he was wise in his generation, like most of the sons of Jacob. And just before the baskets arrived we had made up our minds to boldly attack Will Shakespeare's masterpiece in modern dress, with walking-sticks substituted for swords.

As it was, there was a dearth of weapons pro-

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vided. Iago was a past master in his profession, and travelled with a sword of his own; but the only two weapons sent from the costumier's were a Bengal Cavalry *tulwar*, and a midshipman's dirk. The *tulwar* was, naturally, accorded to the "coloured" hero; but when the time arrived for the duel, it had passed into the possession of Michael Cassio, whilst Montano had possessed himself of the "cheese knife." Any funnier fight than that one I am much afraid I shall never take part in; and the audience tried very hard to encore it.

The late George Barrett used to tell an amusing story of the first time he played clown. He was a most conscientious, sensitive comedian, and had rehearsed his comic scenes thoroughly and vigorously. The transformation scene had been closed in upon, and harlequin and columbine had finished their opening *schottische*. On came clown and pantaloon, in view of sacking the poulterer's shop. Following the clown, at a brief interval, came the manager, holding up his right hand to ensure silence on the stage. Advancing to the footlights, the manager—who was of lugubrious appearance—addressed the audience thusly,—

"Is there anyone here of the name of Thompson? Because there's a message come to say his brother's dead!"

"After that," poor George used to say, "the first comic scene was just about as comic as the porter's lodge at Pentonville."

Most modern managers are too faint of heart

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to produce such sound, stirring plays as *Pizarro*, which was a great favourite in the provinces at the time when stock companies were in thorough working order. In the course of the tragedy one of the characters has to cross a frail foot-bridge, spanning a foaming torrent, bearing in his arms an infant, whom he is in the act of rescuing. One night, just before the great scene, the infant was missing! Of course it was only a rag doll, with a countenance gradually, from frequent usage, becoming battered out of shape. But it was a most important "property" nevertheless. What was to be done?

The stage-manager, like most of his race, was fertile of resource, and was not long in finding a fitting substitute. A hideous dwarf, a cockney by birth, who played in the pantomime which followed *Pizarro*, had partly dressed himself for "Rumpelstilzchen," and was standing at the wings watching the play. The stage-manager promptly seized up the dwarf, enveloped his lower extremities and handed him to the actor, who was anxiously awaiting his valuable burden, and who, without looking to see what sort of an infant he was holding, clasped him to his bosom, and awaited his cue.

Now! On to the bridge dashed the actor.

"It is Alonzo's still!" he shouted, addressing the foes who followed. "One step more, vile minions, and—"

Here he was not a little startled by the infant exclaiming in gruff tones, —

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"Damn your eyes, don't drop me!" Looking down, he saw a face like the spout of an ale jug, and he quickly realised the facts that the infant squinted horribly and had a four days' old beard!

The poor wretch of an actor was accustomed to drink hard when he possessed the wherewithal; and this apparition was too much for his nerves. With a shriek, as of a soul in torment, he flung the infant into the raging torrent, and a loud "aside" to the audience,— "Boys, I've got 'em again!" he rushed through the stage doorway into the "snug" of the "Spotted Dog," and calling loudly for burnt brandy, missed the end of the act altogether. And but for the fact that there was nobody else in the "crowd" capable of taking the part, that actor would have received his "notice" with much promptitude.

We have heard before now of "Two Richmonds-in-the-Field;" but two "chambermaids" in one farce would indeed be embarrassment of riches. Yet this occurred at the old Theatre Royal, Halifax, in the early "seventies," on the last night of the engagement of the travelling company. That rare old "draw," *East Lynne*, with its false sentiment and its tear-compelling situations, had been the first piece, and the curtain was about to rise on the farce of *Turn Him Out*, which, as most people who were acquainted with the contemporary drama know, was "opened" by the *soubrette*.

But the *soubrette*, although ready dressed

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for the part, was seated at the time in her dressing-room, drumming the heels of her pretty little feet on the floor, and in an hysterical state. Something had happened to aggrrieve her little ladyship—there is no empress as exacting, or who fancies herself more, than did the "singing chambermaid" of the period—and she had given the lady-manager to understand that she would not go on, "if it was ever so."

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! The fair and accomplished lady-manager—it was Rose Coghlan—immediately rose to the occasion. The curtain was already up, and the stage empty.

"Give me the lines, dear old chappie," she hurriedly whispered to the "walking gent," who was waiting at the wing, in readiness to make his entry.

And, albeit in her street dress, on went the plucky "Rosie," to receive a round of applause from her kind and appreciative friends in front.

"What a lazy fellow that painter is!" was the opening line, duly given *sotto voce* by "Eglantyne Roseleaf," at the wing, and duly delivered *con amore* by the deputy chambermaid. And no sooner had the line been given than—on walked the orthodox chambermaid herself, now free from "high strikes" and duly penitent.

The audience applauded the unrehearsed effect; Miss Coghlan retired gracefully, and the play proceeded. And, be it further added, that the writer of these recollections and "Eglantyne

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Roseleaf," the "walking gent," were one and the same person.

Years before the above incident, the nobility, gentry and inhabitants of "rebel Cork" were once treated to two "Hamlets" in the same tragedy. The late Mr J. C. Cowper, who was one of them, told me the story, and here it is :—

The late Mr Gustavus V. Brooke, whose superior as a Shakespearian tragedian has never been known on the English stage, was travelling Great Britain, with a company which included Cowper, who was stage-manager and played "second" to the "star."

Provincial audiences—and more especially Irish audiences—waxed most enthusiastic over the works of the divine William, and the booking for the first night of the engagement at the Theatre Royal, Cork, had been eminently satisfactory. *Hamlet* had been chosen for the opening piece; and doubtless all would have gone well but for one serious and exasperating fact. Gustavus V. Brooke was too ill to appear in his favourite part of the moody Dane.

Cowper had called on his chief at the Imperial Hotel on the Monday afternoon, and found that it would be impossible for Brooke—who was a sad sufferer—to put in an appearance. Under the circumstances there were only two things to be done: Cowper, who was a good, sound Shakespearian scholar, must go on for "Hamlet"; and handbills announcing that fact must be printed, and distributed, broadcast.

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The night came. The first act of the divine tragedy could not have gone better, and Cowper was duly applauded after his desserts.

"Begorrah!" was the consensus of opinion. "Sure the man's as purty a player as ould Brooke himself."

Act II.—Scene 1. Polonius, Reynaldo, Ophelia—all artistic, all right, audience in an excellent temper. Scene 2.—"A Room in the Castle." All right, until the Queen observes,—

"But look where sadly the poor wretch comes, reading."

And then a strange thing happened. On came the deputy "Hamlet," from the prompt entrance absorbed in a book.

Also entered Mr G. V. Brooke as "Hamlet" from the O.P. entrance, also with a book.

"Row?" poor Cowper used to add. "You never heard the like of it."

But Brooke was, as it were, "in possession," and his deputy retired discreetly. And, according to my informant, the Great Gustavus, who, like most histrions of note, was "uneven" from night to night, never played "Hamlet" half as well as he did that night; after looking, a few hours before, more fitted for decent interment than to face the footlights.

The subject of "prompting" would make a most interesting article; although I fear this has become almost a lost art, with plays carefully and minutely rehearsed, with scenes and properties, for months beforehand. But in the good old times of stock-companies, when pieces

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were changed nightly, and their delineators necessarily more or less imperfect in the text, the prompter was a power. And when he had a call-boy under him he would give himself airs; but, as a rule, the prompter did whatever calling was necessary himself.

Old George H——was one of the most eccentric and amusing of prompters. Devoted to the profession, and possessing an intimate knowledge of every detail connected with it, there was yet not one atom of art in his composition.

"Ah!" he would exclaim, at the end of an show, as the audience was rushing out to get to the bar before the "houses" closed, "you may think yourselves very fine actors, but you make a deuced sight too many Macready pauses. Act closer, cockies, closer; and remember your old word-pitcher wants to get home to his bit of bread-and-cheese and half a pint of four-half."

"Look here, cockie," he once told me at rehearsal, in the days when I was a zealous and a very nervous young actor, "it don't matter a damn whether you're perfect in your words or not, that there green curtain has got to come down at ten to eleven or thereabouts, whether you 'dry up' or not."

I have often reflected, in after life, upon the sound, practical commonsense of this maxim; which, although it may engender undue confidence, to the utter ruin of art, is, nevertheless, no bad prop to lean on.

Many weeks together we would play a

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different drama every night; and, lest we should be apt to get confused, dear old George would shout up the stairs to the dressing-rooms the programme for the occasion.

"*Charcoal Burner* to-night, ladies and gentlemen, please!"

"In consequence of the length of time in setting the scenes in the *Sea of Ice*, the concluding burlesque of *Aladdin* will terminate with the chorus, 'Joy, joy, my frame is filling,' in the palace scene, please!"

But, after all, George was a rotten reed to depend upon when you were "stuck."

The most dreadful language to get into one's head I ever met with was in Miss Mitford's version of *Charles I.* I had gone on for Ireton, and was, I fear, somewhat imperfect. On one occasion I threw a pathetic glance at the prompt table. And George wasn't there!

Anon he came bounding to his corner, and seized a pile of acting editions of plays.

"The *line*, for mercy's sake!" I hissed forth in agony.

George was equally annoyed, and asked, in a stage whisper, distinctly audible all over the house, "*What's the piece?*"

Not only has the art of acting improved with the march of time, but the accessories—technically known as "props"—have become quite things of beauty, and as near nature as it is possible to get. The property man is still, I am told, apt to procrastinate, not oblivious of the proud motto of his ancestors:—"All right

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at night!" Modern dresses—in a London theatre, at all events—are made of the same material, and cut, as the Court dressmaker and the West-End tailor put into the garments of their best and wealthiest customers. The furniture in a stage "interior" is the real thing, the rent thereof being a "caution"; and there is but little "makeshift" to be put up with in the modern playhouse.

But in the "palmy" days matters were very different. With admission fees ranging from sixpence to a "dollar"—and even lower—it was not practicable to put good, wholesome food before the players at a stage picnic, or a banquet to Royalty.

Dear old "Johnny" Toole has told us, in his *Reminiscences*, how he invariably put a real market goose on the table for Bob Cratchit's Christmas dinner, in the *Christmas Carol*; and how the small representative of "Tiny Tim" was wont to carry her share of the feast (a very Benjamin's share, you may be sure) home to her brothers and sisters. But the goose which smoked on the board at our festivals was a canvas-backed one, and had previously done its duty in the comic scenes of *Humpty Dumpty*, or in that most amusing of farces, *The Goose with the Golden Eggs*. No Surrey, nor even Russian, fowl died the death to feast the poor player—in the provinces, at all events—in the "seventies"; when our chicken was furnished by a dinner-roll cut into three neat portions, and these fastened together by a wooden skewer.

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Cold tea, with a seidlitz powder divided amongst the drinking vessels into which it was poured, was quite good enough for common mummers' champagne; and as for the other liquids we had to swallow on the stage—well, some of us must have been poison-proof. I once had to drink to the dregs the contents of a six-ounce medicine phial, which draught I quite thought at the time would cause an inquest to be held upon me. Upon questioning the Lancashire property man afterwards as to the nature of the potion, he vowed 'twas "no't but cold ca-ffee," but I was convinced at the time that there was size, if not varnish, "intilt."

Barry Sullivan was very particular about the production of the necessary "props" at rehearsal. And once, at the old Theatre Royal, Dublin, the great man rejected, in turn, a metal coffee-pot, a hot-water jug, a flower vase, a moderator lamp, and a vessel made of gilded wickerwork, which had been used in the kitchen scene of *Jack, the Giant Killer*, the last pantomime. It took three men to carry it.

"Will this do, sir?" inquired the property man, who was, I fear, a bit of a wag.

"No, sir," cried the horrified tragedian, "it will *not* do. Bring back the coffee-pot; and see that a silver claret-jug, such as a young gentleman of fortune would have in his house, is in readiness for to-night."

And then we proceeded to rehearse the banquet scene in *The School for Scandal*.

Even more important was the rehearsal of

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Ophelia's funeral; and once — at Wigan, I think it was—I thought I should have died, whilst seated beside poor old Barry—who was a large-hearted man, despite his bullying ways—when, at the given cue, six "pure virgins," as represented by six giggling ballet-girls, made their appearance carrying a draped orange-box.

"Why, how now?" growled the indignant tragedian. "What indecent rites are these, hussies? Ye are supposed to be conveying to the tomb the corse of a pure virgin, and ye are swinging it about as though it contained the corse of a cat! Had I a ginger-beer bottle within reach, I would heave it at ye! Go back, and come on again in a reverent manner!"

But the most knavish touch of all was played during an amateur performance.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER.—"This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester."

HAMLET.—"This?" (*Takes skull*).

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER.—"E'en that."

But the outraged "Hamlet," instead of moralising upon the fate of "poor Yorick," proceeded to kick the skull into the orchestra. It was a Rugby Union football!

Last of all let an excruciatingly comic scene be recorded, which took place at Maryport, in Cumberland, during a performance of *East Lynne*.

The little girl who usually enacted the part of "Willie Carlisle" had missed her train—oddly enough, for Carlisle. A substitute had to

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be found, and quickly, too. Eventually the services of the boy who sold programmes in front of the house were requisitioned; but as no persuasion could induce the leading lady to take part in the pathetic "front scene," in which the boy partially recognises his mother, that scene was "cut." But the dying scene in the bedchamber could not, for obvious reasons, be omitted. Therefore the lad was tucked well up in a little cot, which was much too short for him, and a most obliging young lady, who sang, or danced, between the pieces, when required, knelt down behind the bed, out of sight of the audience, to read the dying child's lines.

The unfortunate "Madame Vine," the leading lady, was in a semi-hysterical state throughout the scene, and no wonder! The programme-boy, a fine, healthy youth of some fifteen summers, had been specially instructed that at the words "Mamma is calling me!" he was to raise himself up and stretch forth both arms to the "flies," as representing the kingdom of heaven. At the proper moment he did so; and then, not till then; was the awful discovery made that in the hurry of the moment nobody had remembered to strip his jacket off.

"Mamma is calling me!" And up rose the boy, in full panoply of page's jacket, with three rows of buttons. He was in his habit as he served. There was one prolonged yell from the audience, and the leading lady fell, in a violent fit of hysterics, upon the boy, pinning him flat to the cot. The audience wanted the scene

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played all over again; but the stage-manager, who appeared in front of the curtain, explained, in a neat speech, that however willing all concerned would be to oblige, a repetition of the incident would not coincide with the best interests of Art.

CASH BOOKMAKING

At the period when the following was written the "half-crown ring" had just been established. The hard-headed capitalists who started the "park meetings" at Sandown, Kempton and elsewhere, being fully aware that the poorer portion of their customers are just as well furnished with the gambling instinct as those who are provided with larger incomes, gave the first-named class a ring and stand of their own at a cheap admission fee, rather than allow them to wager "outside."

That these cheap enclosures have been the means of sending up dividends is certain; and the stewards of the Jockey Club—who have all along been jealous of the success of these superior "gate-meetings"—were not long in following the example of the "twenty per centers," and erecting a cheap ring on the sacred Heath of Newmarket. In the palmy days that Heath used to be dotted over with metalicians who paid nothing for the privilege. But the authorities have altered all that; and although it is now a capital offence to wager "outside," parting with the necessary fee enables the wagerer to bet as he listeth, secure from the interference of the authorities.

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The names given in the following are the correct ones ; although modern racegoers know but little of the "bookie" and his "mindere."

"THE SILVER KING"

"I hold it truth with him who sings
That bookies feed on punters' bones,
And rise to wealth on stepping-stones
Of their dead cops, like blooming kings."

—ANDY ANDERSON'S *In Memoriam*.

Upon more than one occasion whilst driving, or being driven, down to some suburban race-meeting, had my attention been directed to a smart vehicle which invariably passed us on the road ; a vehicle half phæton, half buggy, drawn by a blood-horse of high-stepping proclivities, and steered by a good-looking, dark-complexioned man, with a keen pair of eyes and a genial expression of countenance. On the body of the carriage was (and doubtless is still) neatly painted a black-and-white check pattern, and at the back appears, in letters of modest dimensions, the owner's name (or "monaker" as he would doubtless prefer to call it):—"George Robinson, Champion Cheque Firm."

"And who the deuce is George Robinson?" I inquired one morning, somewhat peevishly, of my *compagnon de voyage*, as the high-stepper dashed past us with the Champion Cheque

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chariot, whose wheels left as a legacy a considerably greater share of dust than we cared about.

"What?" inquired the man alongside me. "D'you mean to say you don't know 'The Silver King' yet?"

"The wha-at?"

"The boss of the half-crown ring, the enlightener of the outer darkness of the race-course, the picker-up of the crumbs which the generals (I was going to say the rich men, but he's quite as rich as a good many of 'em) of the betting-ring have no opportunity of stooping for. Not know George Robinson! Why, man alive, where have you been all your life? Did you ever hear of Sir Garnet Wolseley, or Peter Wilkinson, or Jack Coney?"

Being a man who prides himself upon a peculiar knowledge of men and things of every description, I felt somewhat piqued at my own ignorance, and determined, when opportunity should offer, to stalk this new subject to his lair—or rather to his laying place.

I discovered him on the Rays at Windsor one sultry afternoon. Standing on the bottom step, at the far corner of the shapeless and uncovered mound which is dignified by the name of "Public Stand," was the object of my search. Tall and erect, clad in a coat and vest of black corduroy, from beneath the pattern of which peeped forth thin streaks of white—the attire being eminently suggestive of a cloud with a silver lining—his nether limbs thrust into high

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Jack boots, and a satchel suspended from his shoulders, was "The Silver King."

On one side of him his clerk and on the other lurked a bullet-headed gladiator, clad in a suit of check, his mission on the race-course being (as I afterwards learnt) "to keep the boys off the governor"—"boys" being a generic term for the evildoers of the betting-ring, such as "snatchers," "lifters," and the like. Hard by was another individual, who also evidently belonged to the "Champion Cheque Firm." This gentleman is of commanding stature, and possesses about the roundest and the reddest countenance it was ever my lot to gaze upon. On the occasion referred to he held in one hand an enormously long post-horn, whilst with the other he balanced what appeared at first sight to be a fishing-rod on the top of the inner railing of the enclosure. Further inspection established the fact of a china mug being at the other end of the fishing-rod, and into this receptacle the British sportsman who lacked the half-crown necessary to procure him admission into the "Broker's Paradise," or was chary of parting with the same, was accustomed to deposit the silver coin which he wished to invest on the horse of his choice. Upon the first establishment of these "half-crown rings" I was told, subsequently, there was but a single railing round each. This, however, was found to offer little or no impediment to communication with the outer world, and therefore a second line of fencing was planted. It was to circumvent,

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or, rather, to get over this further difficulty that the "fishing-rod" system was introduced, Upon the mug which scooped in so many other mugs' shillings and florins (it rarely ran to half-a-crown, I noticed) for the "Champion Cheque Firm" appeared the appropriate inscription:—

"Blessed are the Piece-makers!"

I have been present when a candidate for Parliamentary honours was addressing an enlightened constituency of his countrymen. I have seen the monarch of the glen standing at bay in the famous Badgeworthy Water in the heart of Exmoor. And I have been witness to the wild dash across Fleet Street when the news has gone forth that Master has just changed a tenner, and is standing bowls of punch at the Cheshire Cheese. But anything like the mad clamour of these silver punters, their fierce struggles to be the first to "down it" on the presumed good thing, or the seething, surging mass of humanity which swarmed around the gentleman in the corduroy suit I had never previously been made acquainted with. I could almost believe him when he told me afterwards that on that one race he had taken nearly £100 in silver alone.

"And the weight of the merry little satchel has nearly broken my back—to say nothing of my backers," he went on to remark in his cheery way.

Over a bottle of champagne, not many weeks ago, I drew him out a bit.

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"'How long have I been at this game?'—
Not above a dozen years or so, and not more
than half of that on my own hook—I was
clerking for Face Wilson before. Bless you, I've
been nearly everything in my time. I began
life as a call-boy at the — Theatre, and
could tell you some rare tales of what went on
behind the scenes, if we had time. You must
come and see me at my country residence some
day. I've got a billiard-room as big as a church.
Then I got sick of it, and ran away to sea.
The vessel was looted by pirates in the China
Seas, and I was taken prisoner along with the
captain and the cook. Did my six months in a
Chinese gaol, on puppy dogs and rice, and then
managed to escape to Hong-Kong. Shipped
aboard a merchantman as second mate, and
came back to the old country with the firm
resolution not to leave it again. Opened a little
grocer's shop in Brixton, but soon turned that
up—or rather it turned *me* up. Then I became
a riding-master. I couldn't ride a bit at that
time, but that didn't matter. Then I got into
the wine trade, and then the wine trade got into
me, and I received the Order of the Boot. Then
I travelled as agent in advance to a circus, and
then I went back again into the theatrical line.
Nature originally cut me out for a light comedian
—and if so many other light comedians hadn't
cut me out, too, I might have done better at the
game. There was still left for me the music-
hall profession, and when working the halls I
rather flatter myself I made my mark. Three

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turns a night, my boy, at a fiver a week each—good biz, eh? I was nearly thirty before I ever saw a race-course, but the first time I ventured on one and piped the way the bookmakers kept collaring the pieces I said to myself, 'George, dearest, that's the merry little caper for you.' And so I got a shop as a clerk, and, having something else besides cotton-wool or oak shavings in this old nut of mine, I managed to stick to enough to start me on my own bottom. And I shall very likely continue to keep on laying 'em until I can find some other trade that'll bring in more than two hundred and fifty a week after deducting exes and wages and drinks for old Pop and Barney Shepherd and wear and tear of the post-horn. What do *you* think?"

"Is it possible? Two fifty a week!"

"It's a positive fact, sir. I assure you I've got round shouldered all through having so much money hanging down in front of me. I've been sick and tired of counting the half-crowns and shillings many and many a time, and I suppose I carry away a sackful of silver that pretty nigh weighs a hundredweight in that trap of mine most evenings. And then you mustn't run away with the idea that mine are all silver customers, either."

"Indeed? You surprise me."

"Bless your life, there's many a swell who's taken the knock that comes to my show with his fiver or his couple. And for a dead sharp commend me to a swell that's taken the knock

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And plenty of commissions come over the rails from the big ring—you see, they can generally get a better price in this place, if they're half tricky. But, tricky or not, I get the best of the game by the end of the day. I oughtn't to get blowing my own trumpet, though, now I've got a trumpeter of my own. Poor old Pop! You should hear him perform on that post-horn. Before we commence operations, he gives 'em 'Come, Lads and Lasses,' or 'Riflemen, Form!' or else 'Drops o' Brandy.' 'Good-bye, Sweetheart' is the signal that the flag's down, and I'm not to be sharpened into another bet. When I am going to pay out, instead of shouting, 'Bring up your tickets!' as the common, low people do, Old Pop tootles up with 'Haste to the Wedding,' or 'When You've got the Money, You're a Brick, Brick, Brick!' And at the end of the day, just to kid to 'em, you know, that they've cleaned us out, we indulge in a trio—words by yours truly—my clerk (he used to sing at the Chapel Royal) *alto*, me *tenor*, and Old Barney *basso profundo*, Pop popping in *obligatos* with the tootler. The chorus goes :—

“‘Shake the empty satchel, money's gone!’

And all the time I'm chinking the merry little quiddiwiddies in my kick, and the gentle Shepherd's sitting on the satchel. Ha, ha! it makes me laugh to think what a game we have with 'em.”

“You'll excuse my asking the question,

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Mr Robinson. Why is your friend called Pop?"

"I'm not surprised at your asking, as it has been a mystery to many people. One story is that when he was dead broke he wanted to 'pop' himself to a tobacconist in the Borough Road, to stand outside the door with a snuff-box, in full Highland toggery. But I believe the real reason is that he's so keen on champagne. Strike me lucky! you ought to see his face when he hears a bottle opened. It's like the most beautiful landscape that ever was painted. Poor old Pop! What a chairman of a music-hall he would make."

"And the pugilist that you specially retain on the premises?"

"Barney Shepherd? Worth his weight in gold as a 'minder,' sir. There's not a better bruiser in the ring, nor a better plucked 'un. I've seen that man get one of his eyes knocked right out, and lying on his cheek—and he wanted to go on scrapping, and would have done, too, if the other cove hadn't been bashed silly for three hours and a half. And he's a born comedian, too. You should just hear him tell the tale of the young lady and the paraffin lamp. And his description of the scene at Stockbridge when somebody opened the smelling-bottle just outside the club window, when Sir John Astley and Lord Marcus Beresford were inside, is as good as any play."

"Do you think they'll ever stop ready-money betting in the ring?"

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"Wha-a-at? Not likely. Where would the gate-money be then? Why, bless your life, ready-money betting is just as much part and parcel of the Turf as the Jockey Club is. It mightn't make much difference to me, though, if they did. I sometimes think of retiring from the gay and festive scene in a year or two. I'm positively getting tired of winning money, Mr Gubbins, and I've made quite enough to live comfortably on for the rest of my life, to say nothing of the princely estate and the bit in the Funds that my heir-at-law will get when I go aloft. I want to end my days in peace and quietness. I was always a bit of a poet; and some of these days mean to publish a volume or two of my works. I once wrote an entertainment for the charming Sisters Trotterini, and *such* a song for Posh the Patterer, that used to do a show at the Mogul—you should have heard it—'The Bloke with the Kateever Mince.' And another one for Miss Anastasia Wapping, the pleasing serio-comic—'Dear Mother, I've come Home to Tea and Shrimps!' Only last year I wrote an ode to the Grand Stand at Croydon. I've got a copy of it in my pocket now, and if you're not particularly busy I'll read—"

"Mr Robinson," I said, hastily rising, "I should much like to hear that ode—in fact, my soul is positively bursting for the possession of it—but the fact of the matter is I've had a long-standing engagement with the Under-Secretary for War, and he doesn't like being kept waiting. You'll excuse me, I'm sure. I think a better

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fellow than yourself does not exist, nor a more agreeable companion, nor yet an abler book-maker. But business is business. *Au revoir.*"

And I left him.

BILL BATHURST ONCE MORE

BILL discourses on the artistic way to "stop 'em," and describes how a modicum of garden-stuff won a fortune for himself and confederate.

A BUNCH OF CARROTS

"Yes," said Mr Bathurst, "that's a good field of turnips. Altogether, I've had nothing to grumble at this year as regards crops. Prices, however, are deuced bad, and so we farmers only just exist; but, as you know, my farm don't keep me. Now, look here, that's a tidy crop of carrots. Oh! yes. I use them for feeding cattle. But carrots have made for me—and a very small quantity, too—more money than the fee-simple of my farm is worth. How's that? Well that entails a story, and will take some telling. But as you have heard and chronicled some of my little yarns, you may as well hear this one. 'As well be skinned for a sheep as a lamb,' you know.

"It's not so very long ago that I owned a very smart colt, which we will call Iconoclast. He never ran until he was a three-year-old. I bought him as a yearling at Doncaster for very

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little money. He looked to me a good-shaped 'un—he was undeniably a good-bred 'un—but he was small and ragged in his coat, altogether a mean-looking animal, and, as I said before, I got him cheap. He grew into a very good-looking horse, and I found, when I tried him, that he was as good as he looked. His first appearance in public was in a selling race at Lacetown Spring Meeting, the winner to be sold for £100. He won in such a style that I was out of pocket with the cost of buying him in. I was a bit disgusted with myself for not having backed him for more money, and made a profit over the transaction; but I saw at once that it would not do to let him go, so for once in a way I was a loser when one of mine won. At this time I was doing pretty well; had a tidy balance in the bank, a well-stocked farm, and a dozen horses of one kind and another, and my stables represented a lot of money; that is, if I could place them well. Hunters I could always dispose of at a profit.

The Old Blankshire and the South Blankshire knew me well, and many a good deal I've made after a hard day over the big fences in the vale. It's not given to all of us the faculty of properly showing off a horse. The riding does it; a horse knows well enough when he has a workman on his back, and one who, like myself, can ride, not only with his hands, but with his head and his heart.

"Pluck is contagious, and the horse does his honest best when judiciously and courageously

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handled and ridden. I had a few steeplechasers which would have to eat the bread of idleness until the following season, when I did not doubt that I could get rid of them to pay exes, and a bit over. The flat racing had just commenced for the year, and with Iconoclast and another I hoped to bring off a *coup* or two, which would enable me to sing, 'Oh! be easy,' for some time to come.

"The difficulty that exists in owning horses, even when you train them yourself, is that you are compelled to take someone into your confidence. It's impossible to be the only one 'in the know,' and as it has been my luck to live among the sharpest of the sharp, I have, as the Yankees say, to look out to keep my eyes well skinned if I wish to get what I consider my proper share of the plunder. So good a thing did I think I had got in Iconoclast that I had serious thoughts of sending him away to the north of England to be trained and prepared for his future engagements.

"My friends and neighbours are all particularly downy birds; alive to every move and up to every dodge, and their co-operation in any little undertaking can only be purchased at a heavy price. A good thing, when it is cut up between two or three, ceases to be a good thing. I'm not particularly selfish, but I must own that I'm like most other people, and prefer to have the lion's share when the spoil is divided. I've lived so long in this place, and have had at one time or another a deal of some

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sort with most of the people about, I don't suppose that any of them could teach me much. I know deuced well that I would not trust one of them, even if it came to selling or buying a quarter of wheat or a pig.

"This being the case, you can well understand that I was somewhat bothered to know what to do for the best. If I sent Iconoclast away, I might be done. They know a thing or two in the north; so good are they, in fact, up there that I've often regretted my lines were not cast in that pleasant place, where a horse can run with impunity in different form, varying from 1st. to 5st. in as many weeks.

"Down south we are obliged to be a little more careful, and for this strict supervision I think we have to thank the Press, which is always going out of its way, as I think, to pry into matters which in no way concerns it.

"The public interest, you say?—Well, I won't swear, though I should like to—but just let the public, that highly moral and generous British public, look after its own interests—it's not quite a child; it can run alone very well without help. Don't talk to me about the public, I'm sick of its very name.

"I run a horse, say, for my own amusement; he runs pretty well, but don't win. Then, one of you newspaper fellows writes:—

" 'Mr William Bathurst's very good-looking colt, Puller, was bang in front to the distance, when he suddenly disappeared. We made a note

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of the performance, and shall look out for this customer in the back-end.'

"Now, I call this ruining a man's business prospects, for the blessed public will be continually on the lookout to forestall me, and I am driven to my wit's end to devise a plan by which I may get the best of it. I look upon the public as my natural enemy, and ever shall do to the end of the chapter; but after all I've nothing much to grumble at, for in most cases I've sacked the spondulicks and sent your dear friends empty away.

"Well, as you say, let's get back to Iconoclast. I finally determined to keep him at home, and from time to time let him take an exercise gallop in public. He ran five times at different meetings, but he was unlucky, and never once caught the judge's eye. I did not trust him in another selling race, but ran him in small handicaps. Being so often and so well beaten, he began to get among the very bottom weights, and in the Autumn Handicap, at Princesses Park, he was the lowest weighted of the whole entries.

"Tom Light who trains on the eastern side of the Downs, some twenty miles from here, rode over to see me a few days before the acceptances were to be declared, and asked me plainly whether I intended to slip Iconoclast or not. He had a horse, Firefly, which he thought was good enough to win, if mine was out of the way. He told me what his animal could do, and said he only feared mine, and wanted to know the worst.

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"After a long discussion, I proposed that I should ride back with him the following morning and have a look at Firefly, and see whether I thought it worth while to have a trial to ascertain which was the best, and then determine what plan to adopt.

"Firefly was a good-looking four-year-old, which had been well readied, and was in the handicap at a nice winning weight. I rode him a gallop and found he went well—so well, indeed, that I began to think it would be better to wait for another day for Iconoclast: but Tom Light was so urgent that I should work with him that I arranged to bring my horse to his place and discover which was the best. We talked the matter over, and agreed to go together to Hardstone Races, where we should be sure to meet some of the crack jockeys, and get one of them to come down to Blankshire to ride in the trial.

We both meant having a real plunge over the Princesses Park event, and had made our plans pretty straight to bring off the good thing. Binstead, the crack jockey of the day, agreed to ride in the trial, and if he were satisfied with his mount to ride him at Princesses Park. I quite agreed with Light that it would be a near thing between the two horses; but, to make matters certain, Firefly was made to give Iconoclast 10lb. more than in the handicap.

"Binstead rode Firefly in the trial. Light had a rare old tell-tale in his stable, with whom it was impossible to make a mistake. Bokhara

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was his name, and I rode him; a very good boy was on Iconoclast, and two others which took part in the trial were ridden by stable lads.

"The distance was one mile, and Firefly won, after a very good race with Bokhara and Iconoclast, by a length from the former, my horse being close up.

"Binstead thought he had won very cleverly, and, as he knew something of old Bokhara's form, willingly agreed to ride Firefly the next week at Princesses Park, it not being at all likely that any of his aristocratic masters would have anything running there. The trial took place on a Saturday, and the meeting was not until the following Friday.

"Now, I object entirely to knocking horses up by trying them too often, but in this case I was not satisfied. I thought the boy did not make enough use of Iconoclast, and I told Light we must have another trial before putting the pieces down. I suggested that he should ride his own horse, and I mine, and that his best lad should ride the old 'un.

"On the following Tuesday, at daybreak, the spin came off, the only difference being, and it was a great one, that Firefly had not the extra 10lb. up. I sent Iconoclast along at his best pace, and he beat Bokhara easily enough; but Firefly was again too good for him, though this time he only won by about a neck.

"The handicap was thus reduced to a certainty for Firefly; but then came the question whether it would pay us to win with him. Through

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Bokhara, with Firefly out of the way, the race was a real good thing for Iconoclast. Now what would you have done under such circumstances? Well, I won't ask you; but I'll tell you what a sensible man, with no sentimental nonsense about him, did.

"Tom Light was no juggins. He didn't keep horses in order to fill the pockets of a lot of outsiders, who wouldn't, if he had been starving, have given him a brass farthing. On the Friday morning, by the earliest train, we journeyed on to Princesses Park. We had to pass through London, and on arriving at Paddington had to walk the horses a few miles before we reached the course. The horses were in charge of a couple of steady boys. Tom Light and I chartered a hansom and followed slowly behind. The saddles, etc., were put on the top of the cab. Light had a black bag with the colours and little necessities, whilst I had a sack in which were a couple of buckets full of chopped well-salted carrots.

"We had ordered the boys to stop at an inn not far from the course, and we stabled the horses, gave them a small feed of oats, washed out their mouths, and had the muzzles put on. Then we sent the boys into the tap-room to get some grub, and I opened the sack, filled a bucket with the tempting, nice, small cut-up carrots, took the muzzle off one of the horses, and let him eat his fill. He was hungry, the carrots delicious, and he soon finished the whole lot in the bucket. I gave him another handful or two,

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and then, as the poor beast was thirsty, I let him swallow a couple of buckets of water.

"Tom Light kept the boys out of the way until I joined them in the tap-room, and then we all jogged on to our destination. We took the horses straight into the paddock, and there we soon met Binstead, who took the colours and was duly weighed out. I had previously engaged a good lightweight for Iconoclast, and, leaving Tom Light to superintend the weighing arrangements, I went into the ring.

"As is always the case at Princesses Park, the field for the Grand Handicap was large; but I felt confident that nothing likely to start had the ghost of a chance with mine, bar accidents. Blowhard, the bookmaker, was anxious to know what I was going to do. I told him I should like him to get me a hundred on Iconoclast, but not to take less than 10 to 1. I should have spoiled the whole thing, or might have done so, had I let him in behind the scenes. Binstead, in a brand new jacket, cantered down to the post, and Firefly was soon a hot favourite. It somehow got about that he was 2st. in front of old Bokhara, and the public tumbled over one another to take 6 to 4 in a field of twelve starters. Except booking ten ponies Iconoclast, from one of the big men, I had not a bet on the race, all our money was invested starting price. My brother Bob, ever useful, had a good sum to get on and I had given a man I knew in London a commission to get on as much as he could at the clubs.

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"It was, of course, known in the ring that my horse was being backed in London; but the *furor* to back Firefly was so great that I don't think a single soul, besides myself and Blowhard, had a sovereign on Iconoclast.

"Several horses were backed, more especially Skinner's mount—if he were to ride a donkey at Princesses Park hundreds of people would back him. After one false start the field got off well together, and when a quarter of a mile had been covered Binstead was riding his horse. Presently he picked up his whip, and he used it most unmercifully. He was tailed off a long way, but he continued to flay the horse, the people hooting, jeering and hissing until he got poor Firefly past the post.

"The race itself requires no description, for little Patcham came right away with Iconoclast, made all the running, and won hands down by six lengths. Binstead, looking like a veritable demon, rode Firefly into the paddock. Tom Light began to swear at him for ill-using his horse, and threatened to have him up before the stewards.

"'I only wish,' said 'the metal merchant'—a name Binstead was often called by—'I only wish the saddle was on your back, and I had the riding of you. I'd cut your liver out, as I would out of this brute, if I could. Put me on a stuffed horse, indeed!'

"Meanwhile the public, your respectable public, were hooting and howling, and threatening to lynch Binstead, who, in their great

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wisdom, they thought had pulled the horse. The jockey was so disgusted with the behaviour of the fickle public, who had hitherto cheered him on every occasion of his numerous victories, that he left the course at once, vowing that never again would he ride at that meeting.

"I was in the weighing-room when a fellow jockey, a bit of a pal of his, came up to me and said, 'Do you know, Mr Bathurst, what's given "the metal merchant" the needle? It isn't so much the stuffed horse he cares about, for these things may happen to the best of us—we're not always on the job, you know—but he had £100 of his own money on his mount, and he's a bad loser.'

"I confess it was rather hard on Binstead; but, there! someone has always to suffer. Firefly never was worth a straw after the race, so Tom Light lost a good horse over the business. He had the stake, and we divided the bets, which amounted to such a comfortable sum that Tom Light for one has never looked back again. That bucket of carrots was, you see, about the most remunerative crop of that interesting vegetable that I've ever grown."

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

I IMAGINE that it has fallen to the lot of but few people in this vale of tears to have been arrested for debt by a Burmese bum-bailiff; to have been captured, "took," purloined, picked up, and otherwise abstracted by a dashed fellow with a brown skin and no bridge to his nose, and with very little on him besides a loin-cloth. Yet, upon one occasion, owing to circumstances over which he had more or less control, such a sad fate overtook the now happily reformed writer of these lines.

Some years ago, never mind how many—the exact date has nothing to do with the story—I happened to be on detachment with the gallant 197th Roosters (a splendid set of fellows with about eighteenpence amongst them) at the but-little-known station of Panlang Kiow, on the frontier of British Burmah. "And a glorious place, too, doubtless," I can hear some fair reader exclaim. Just so, madam. A glorious place—where it rained during nine months of the year, and you hardly ever went to bed without finding a rat snake ten or twelve feet long coiled up under the sheet. Where mankind lives, eats, drinks and sleeps in pigeon-houses thirty feet from the ground, in order to keep

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out of the wet and circumvent malaria. Where the sheep and the potato are not, but pine-apples sell at two a penny. Where the solitary amusements of civilisation during three-fourths of the year consist in playing billiards and unlimited loo for worthless I.O.U.'s, and in watching the petroleum boats drift down the turgid Irrawaddy River; and where, at the time of my sojourn, there were but eight women in the place with white faces. A glorious place, truly; and one which did credit to the taste and philanthropy of the man who first fixed it as a fitting quarter for the British soldier.

There was a post, *per* steamer, once a month. The telegraph office was one of the finest buildings in the place; but the telegraph clerk was a heathen chewer of decayed fish, which rendered the sending of a message a somewhat unpleasant operation for the sender; and the wire was, as a rule, broken. In the rainy season it was impossible, owing to the swampy nature of the ground, to proceed to a greater distance than three miles in a radius from the centre of the station. Boating there was to be had, certainly, as also swimming; but the propulsion of a Burmese boat, a huge structure as big as a church, entails rather more manual labour and exertion than we cared about in so enervating a climate, and the constant presence of "muggers," otherwise alligators, rendered natation in the region of Palang Kiow rather too exciting an amusement.

The most important event during my first six

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months' residence in this earthly Paradise was the escape of one of the commissariat elephants, which for some reason or other had become insane. This playful mammoth, after slaughtering with his own good trunk and on his bended knees seven persons (one of them a blind man), eventually took it into his head to take up his residence in my back garden; and as the shooting of the brave beast without permission of the chief commissioner (who resided 400 miles away, and had to be communicated with by means of a usually fractured telegraph wire) entailed a fine of the value of the animal, we of the glorious Roosters had a somewhat lively time of it until permission came to sacrifice the elephant.

All this was exciting enough, but in point of interest, it paled before an event which took place the evening but one before Christmas Day.

I was seated at the mess-table, and was just about to imbibe my first spoonful of soup (which was, of course, plentifully besprinkled with fire-flies and other members of the insect race, which swarm everywhere in Burmah, and which must be endured in silence), when a note was put into my hand. It ran as follows:—

"DEAR MUCKER,—I thought I'd give you notice in time. By to-night's boat has arrived a minion of the law—a dashed nigger—with a bit of paper for you, otherwise a writ of execution for a large sum, issued by the Court of

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Budleepore in Central India. I heard him say that he was going to serve it on you to-morrow. What shall you do, old man? I am dead broke, and so I suppose are all you fellows. I hope this won't spoil your dinner,—Yours ever,

"THE DOCTOR."

So it had come at last! A pleasing little episode of my more boyish career whilst in India had resulted in a mandate to seize my wretched carcase. He who had given me this friendly forewarning was the civil doctor of the place, and very civil it was of him by the way.

By next morning I had made up my mind what to do *pro tem*. Time must be gained somehow, and our paymaster—who was miles away at headquarters—must be communicated with. Despatching my two servants on two separate errands, which I knew would take them the whole day to perform, I moved all my worldly goods—with the exception of two bottles of brandy, a dozen of soda-water, and a tin of preserved lobster, into a friend's house; barricaded my door as well as I could, and awaited the result.

It was not long before the enemy hove in sight. He was a tall, lithe, active-looking individual, with a most forbidding cast of features. In one hand he held his long stick of office, and in the other an ugly-looking bit of blue paper, of which—to my shame, also! be it said—I knew only too well the nature. He reconnoitred the premises carefully, and was

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evidently puzzled at seeing nobody of his own colour about. Then he knocked at my apology for a door, eliciting, it is needless to say, no answer. Then he knocked again. Then he looked through the window, but saw nothing for his pains except a horse-cloth and an old pair of boots. Then he knocked again. And then he went away, swearing in the plaintive language of his own country. And then I had a drink.

From my coign of vantage I could see the rascal flitting about from house to house, meeting with but an indifferent welcome at each. Seven times that day did he return to my own habitation. At length night came on apace, and as even bailiffs must sleep sometimes, he discontinued his search. I unbarred my portal, and proceeded to mess, where I took counsel of the bold spirits who joined me at dinner. To attempt to raise the money from my brother-officers was evidently hopeless. They meant well, but were, as a rule, already in debt to the paymaster.

"It's no use, old man," said the Nestor of the party at length. "You'll have to cave in, and let this infernal brown man take you. Then when S——" (the paymaster) "sends the dibs we'll come and storm your dungeon, throw the rupees at the head warder's feet, and carry you off in a blaze of triumph to glory and brandy-and-soda."

Accordingly, next morning, soon after sunrise, seeing the enemy approach from afar off,

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I awaited his arrival with the stern resolution of a martyr. Presently he spied me and shouted,—

"*Aba! Bay go ginny kooderie shaw-ash magillika?*" which, as few people know, is Burmese for "Hallo! Where the deuce have you been hiding?"

"*Thwarthali mut rukko. Asti matchinska*" ("Don't fire. I'll come down"), I replied. And upon his producing a copy of the offensive document I proceeded to ask, in equally choice Burmese, what, as Mr Mantalini inquired upon another occasion, was "the dem'd total?"

O horrible, most horrible! Delays and legal expenses had swelled the modest thousand rupees, originally borrowed at exorbitant interest from a native usurer in the bazaar of Budleepore, into 1549 rupees, 8 annas and a copper or two; or, in English money, £154, 18s., more money than there was within 100 miles. There was no mistake about it. The writ was a "right 'un," and had, moreover, been countersigned by the officer commanding the district. Altogether it was a nice little Christmas present.

There was no help for it. The offensive documents enjoined my captor to deliver me into the safe custody of the Governor of Purrum Gaol, about ten miles distant down the river. My brother-officers bade me good-bye with tears in their eyes—there was hardly a man Jack of them who didn't hold some of my paper—and I took an equally touching farewell of my two

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servants—each of them three months in arrear with his hardly-earned wage. The population turned out *en masse* to witness my departure. The simple maidens, who sold the flowers and fruits of the country, pelted me with guavas and bananas as parting gifts. The very dogs barked out of the exceeding gladness of their hearts ; and had there been a bell to be rung in the meagrely-furnished cowshed which did duty for a church, I verily believe somebody would have rung it. A merry Christmas, truly ! And as I bethought me of the scorched goat, the preserved potatoes, and the stick-jaw pudding, which would be the portion of my more fortunate companions at the festive board that evening, I groaned in spirit, lit a cheroot, and bade the emissary of justice, as represented by a semi-nude barbarian, conduct his prisoner, as represented by one of H.M.'s very worst bargains in the way of officers, in very seedy mufti, to the boat.

Usually upon occasions such as this, in more civilised regions, the first question I would ask my captor, after the preliminary formalities had been settled, was what he would take to drink. To which the stereotyped reply was, "Whatever you please, guv'nor. Mine's a most hun-pleasant dooty to perform, and if it warn't for a wife and family—" the rest of the speech being drowned in what I had pleased to order for his refreshment. But to exchange these ordinary civilities with a man who knew not the taste of whisky, and whose greatest luxury in life was a

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portion of putrid cat-fish mixed with grease, or half a fried snake—eugh! the idea was too loathsome, and I abandoned it at once.

We got on board, and were soon drifting down the very dirtiest of rivers in the world, the swarthy boatmen occasionally resting on their oars to take a pull at their cheroots, or to make the glorious Christmas Day hideous with some painful but popular chant of their own. Ever and anon a melancholy-looking pelican would flop down on the water and paddle away by the side of us till it got tired of our company; whilst at many a break in the jungle on either side could be seen a buffalo, a tiger, or an elephant, who had come down to taste of the filthy stream for want of a better.

In my loneliness I got thinking over the past, and then upon the very cerulean prospect afforded by the future. Before me a loathsome gaol, badly ventilated, ill-drained, the companionship of half-caste clerks and others who had failed to satisfy their creditors' demands, the vilest of food to eat, and as for drink—bah! On either side of me was the river—and on a sudden a happy thought flashed across me. There on the seat in front of me dozed the bailiff, the original document, the writ, beside him. I was always a good swimmer, and 'twas but a mile at best to the shore. Anything rather than captivity. And a great gulp came up in my throat as I inwardly exclaimed, "I'll do it!"

I did it. To snatch up the fatal writ was but

Told in "Tatt.'s"

the work of a moment. To plunge into the swollen stream, and dive far away from my captor, was the labour of but another moment. Sp-p-p-p-las-s-s-s-h! and up again.

Then I looked round, and—ye gods!—saw that the Burman had followed me. There he was, blowing like a grampus but ten yards behind, and rapidly gaining on me. I had hardly time to observe thus much, when, oh, horrors of horrors! an enormous alligator obtruded his ugly head just on my right. A faint cry escaped me. Better a prison cell than this. I gave myself up for lost, until I saw the huge beast, instead of making for my unfortunate carcase, heading straight for the Burman. I remembered afterwards having read that these river tigers invariably prefer the flavour of brown meat to that of European. Again did I look round, when suddenly *another* alligator, the female, appeared on the scene. And now comes the extraordinary part of the story. It is a curious fact in the natural history of the Saurian tribe that no matter the amount of prey about, where one goes the rest will all follow, as in the case of our own dear domestic sheep. This I have since heard, although at the time of my immersion ignorant of the fact. Very well, then. The female, scorning to satisfy her hunger on so unappetising a joint as myself, followed in the track of her husband, and just arrived in time to see him bolt the poor Burman whole. By this time I was well on my way to the shore, which I reached more dead

Told in "Tatt.'s"

than alive. Whether I should have reached it at all but for the assistance of a native fisherman, who dragged me to land in his net, is extremely doubtful.

When, two days afterwards, a weary and wan individual, covered with mud and blood-stains, his clothes torn to tatters, with the hungry expression of the wolf on his features, presented himself at the mess-house of the gallant 197th Roosters at Panlang Kiow, but few recognised the once dapper, smart little Captain Mucker. I told my simple tale; and, needless to say, not one of them believed it. In fact, not until a telegram arrived a week later to arrest me on a charge of murder was the slightest credence placed in my narrative. The lying thieves of boatmen had naturally sworn before the nearest magistrate that I had thrown the bailiff overboard, and had then jumped in myself and escaped. But, happily, further cross-examination got out the truth, and I was once more a free man. In any case, it was pretty generally agreed amongst the gallant Roosters that bailiff-killing was but justifiable homicide.

Don't tell me I didn't mourn the loss of that poor brown man, ladies and gentlemen. I saw him in my dreams for many a night after the occurrence; his terror-stricken expression, his eyes starting from their sockets as the monstrous alligator opened his jaws are still in my mind's eye, and that shriek of agonised despair as he slid down that remorseless throat will haunt me to my dying day.

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Well, that's all, isn't it? Eh, what? You want to know about the money—the debt that I was arrested for? Well, you may rest assured that it was duly—but it's a long story, and not over amusing; so be content with what you've got, and wish me a jollier time of it during this present festive season than I had during those few days when I passed such a very merry Christmas.

THE END

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